Fire Emblem Awakening: What if?

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Summary: Acollection of "what if" stories from Fire Emblem 13 (Awakening). Characters might be a little OOC.

Chapter 1: Chapter 1: Robin's Final Choice

Yeah, this one isn't really a "what-if" story, but most people seem to have to chosen the "sacrifice yourself" option at the end, and I wanted to see if I could write a more bitter ending to the game, so here goes...

Edit: 7/22/13-Author's Notes added. (1)

"Five thousand gold pieces per use?!" Chrom yelped. "But…that's insane!"

Anna simply smiled and winked. "Hey, you're welcome to find another Outrealm gate, if you can find one," the merchant said. "I'll tell you what; if you throw in your Falchion, I'll lower the price to one thousand GP."**(2)**

Chrom's eye twitched and Robin had to pull him back before Chrom did throw in his Falchion…at Anna's face**(3)**. "Anna, this expedition is for exploration reasons," the tactician said. "It would be a great honor to host this experiment."

Anna thought for a bit. "I'd rather have the gold," she replied.

Robin sighed. There was no arguing with the red-haired Outrealm guardian. They had traveled to different dimensions several times before, but the prices Anna had charged were always a bit more…reasonable. Perhaps if she hadn't known the reason for their trip, she would have charged less.

Amonth earlier, a rumor had spread that there was a place in the Outrealms that would allow people to see what *could* have happened had they taken a different path in the past. Chrom and the rest of the Shepherds planned to go to this area to observe the other endings to events. They weren't sure how it would work, or even if it would, but frankly, they were quite bored after the Final Grima War. It wasn't that they weren't thankful for the end of the war, but some of the Shepherds were getting restless. Robin especially wanted to see what would have happened had he chosen to let Chrom deliver the final blow to Grima. He didn't doubt that he made the right choice (Grima was destroyed, and he had lived), but natural curiosity still nagged at him.

Lucina was also anxious to see another path that she almost took. Near the end of the war, she had nearly

killed her husband when she had learned that he was destined to kill her father. She couldn't bring herself to harm Robin, however, and fate was disregarded as Chrom survived Robin's attack. She had learned to forgive herself since then, but fearful questioning haunted her nightmares every now and then.

"Excuse me, coming through," a voice said, as someone pushed her way through the Shepherds. Anna's younger sister, Anna, stood in front of the Anna that ran the Outrealm gate. "Hey there, sis!" Anna said happily (the Anna that had come with the Shepherds, that is).

Anna smiled. "How are you doing, Anna?" she exclaimed. Anna and Anna whispered to each other as Robin and Chrom watched, frowning at the eerie sight in front of them. Anna and Anna were completely alike in every way, their clothes the only defining factor between the two. "Alright, we've reached a deal," Anna said (the Anna that was running the Outrealm Gate, not the Anna that…y'know what? Screw it. I'm calling her Outrealm Anna).**(4)**

"Finally," Chrom mumbled. "How much?"

Shepherd Anna walked back to her wagon, which she had insisted that she bring along with her everywhere, resulting in stops every half hour to sell something to a passing traveler. She dug inside of the wagon and pulled out a stack of papers bound in string, which she tossed to Outrealm Anna.

"What's that?" Robin asked.

Outrealm Anna pulled the string and showed one of the papers to the Shepherds. "These things are sure to sell like hotcakes!"

Chrom looked at the paper…and screamed. Sumia, Chrom's wife, somehow tripped without walking. Robin facepalmed. Lucina covered her mouth with her hand. Lissa…laughed. Frederick slowly backed away from Chrom. "Frederick…I thought you had destroyed all of the copies…" Chrom said slowly, regaining his composure.**(5)**

"I…may have forgotten, milord," Frederick said meekly. When Ylisse was at war with Plegia, Frederick had taken the liberty of having an artist draw a picture of Chrom naked and sending copies of it as recruiting posters, insisting that it would boost morale.

Chrom turned to glare at Frederick. "We're going to be eating bear for the next month," he said gravely.

Outrealm Anna carefully placed the posters on the ground next to her. "Alright, you ready? I'm surprised that you didn't bring your whole sheep-herding group."

"We're just making sure that this Outrealm is real," Robin replied. "The rest of the Shepherds will be coming later."

Outrealm Anna nodded. "OK! I can tell you now: it's real. I've used it myself. Many a time I've cursed the time I sold an item for ten GP too low."**(6)** She sighed sadly at the memory. "Ah, regrets."

Lucina coughed. "Father, we should go," she said quietly, trying to stop Chrom from glaring at Frederick.

"Alright, alright," the Exalt replied. The handful of Shepherds stepped into the green Outrealm gate. Outrealm Anna murmured a few words and waved her hand over some symbols on the edge of the gate. The warriors were bathed in a green light, and with a sound like thunder, they were in a grassy field.**(7)**

"Well…now what?" Lissa asked.

Robin pointed towards of the middle of the field. "I'd say that's a good of a place to start as any." In the center of the meadow was a tome on a pedestal. The book was lined with gold, and the podium shined like diamond. The writing in the book was that of a language forgotten long ago.

"Well…who goes first?" Chrom asked. His friends looked at him silently. He sighed. "Very well…Robin, you go first."

"Wha-what?" Robin stammered.

"You heard me. That's an order."

Robin glared at Chrom, but stepped up to the tome. He took a breath and placed his hand on it. The book began to glow, and at once Robin felt his spirit leave his body. He found himself in a dream-like zone. There seemed to be no exit or end to the area, and his surroundings pulsed with a greenish-yellow color. The tome was in the center of the room. He then noticed the bubbles. Several bubbles floated around him, each with a different scene. In one bubble he saw himself a king of a foreign land. In other he saw himself as a slave, destined to live his days in captivity**(8)**. In yet another bubble he saw himself being married to Lissa. But there was one specific scenario that he wanted to find…ah, there it was. He saw himself on the back of the dragon Grima, preparing to make the choice that would decide the future of generations.

Robin carefully touched the bubble, and the room suddenly shifted and changed. Robin was now watching the battle again, except this time he was watching himself. "Whoa," he mumbled, looking down at himself. Testing a theory, he reached out to touch Chrom's shoulder. His hand passed right through the man. He called out, "Hello!" and yet no one seemed to hear him. Robin watched Chrom run up to the weakened Grima.

"This ends now!" Chrom shouted. He readied his Exalted Falchion, about to strike down Grima. Robin saw himself tense, but Chrom proceeded to slay the Dark Dragon. "Finally…it's over," the king said.

The scene shifted again, and Robin saw "other" Robin sitting at his desk. He looked over the dozen books scattered around the desk, the dim candlelight barely illuminating his counterpart's face. The man looked weary and old; much like the real Robin was when he spent sleepless nights reading tactic books during the war. Just then, a blue-haired woman walked into the room. "Robin?" the woman asked softly.

"What is it?!" the weary man snapped. "I'm busy."

The woman sighed, as if she was used to such outbursts. "You've been awake for hours now. Can't you put this matter aside for one day? You need your rest."

"What I *need* is to find a way to stop Grima from rising again, Lucina! And you're not helping, so why don't you and Morgan just go back to your pretty little perfect world, hm?" The man stood up from his seat and pushed the woman back through the door.

"I told you that we would find a way to end Grima together!" Lucina insisted, trying to push her way back into the room.

"IT'S WASN'T YOUR CHOICE!" Robin roared. "You didn't make a decision that doomed a future generation! You have no guilt, no shame!"

Lucina winced at her husband's words. "I almost killed you," she said softly. "Don't you think that my decision didn't fill me with terror every time I saw my father?"

Robin's face softened. He sighed and sat down on the chair, defeated. "You…you're right…I'm sorry…I just…can't help thinking that I could have chosen better."

Lucina smiled sadly. "You made the right choice, Robin. If I had lost you, I would have been devastated. Did you really want to snuff out the last bit of happiness that I had?"

Robin smirked, a slight shadow of his famous expression. "You'd still have Morgan…and Sumia's pies." **(9)**

Lucina chuckled. "My mother does make some great pies…" The two laughed, not a grand laugh, or a completely happy one, but it was something.

The walls faded, as did the couple, and Robin felt himself moving through time once again. This time, his other self was barely recognizable. This Robin was on his deathbed, his face wrinkled with false hopes, and his hands shaky with the fact of failure. His eyes betrayed a mind that had long given up. The wedding ring on his left hand was dull, its previous luster no longer existent. "Please," he spoke, his voice like hooves on gravel. "Hand me another book."

A woman sat across from the dying man. She had long blue hair, a young face that knew both pain and childlike joy, and shining eyes that projected a genius. "Father," the woman pleaded, "don't continue this. Mother begged you to stop this fruitless journey. It was her last wish for you."

The man coughed violently, the peace of death slowly approaching. "I…I can't…the pain…of choice…"**(10)** He coughed again, beginning to lose the ability to form coherent words.

The woman walked up to him and took his hand in hers. "Father…let go…please…"

Robin looked at his daughter, regret in his eyes. "Promise me…don't try to…stop Grima."

Morgan smiled sadly. "I never planned to. I couldn't become you, father."

The man nodded slowly, feeling his last breaths. "That…is for the best…Chrom…Lucina…forgive me…" And with that, the great tactician Robin felt his heart cease to beat, and all that was left was a pile of old bones.

Morgan rose from her seat, biting back tears. The door opened behind her, and an older Inigo stepped into the room. "You alright?" he asked, putting a hand on his wife's shoulder.

The woman simply shrugged sadly. "I…I don't know," she admitted.

Inigo looked over his father-in-law. "What a waste**(11)**," he sighed. "I hope the history books will put him in a bit more positive light. He's to be buried next to Chrom and Lucina, right?"

Morgan nodded. Her husband gave her a quick kiss before exiting to alert the officials. The young tactician stood up and picked up the book Robin had been studying. *Legacy*. Ironic. Not only for Grima's return in two millennia, but also for the world that Robin had left behind. Morgan looked at the book…and tossed it into the fire pit. She wanted no part in the hell that her father had experience. She would certainly look for a way to prevent the next coming of Grima, but she refused to let that goal consume her. She looked one last time at the dead man, and then left the room.

The room shifted and changed, and Robin was again in the glowing area. The bubbles still floated from here to there. He released a breath that he didn't know that he had been holding. *Was that…truly what I could have become? Pushing away my wife and child? It wouldn't be the first time I had overly devoted myself to something…but I had always made time for my family…the guilt…the pressure...could it have been so much that I would have wasted the rest of my life?* He looked up. He didn't want to spend any more time in the room for the rest of the day. He placed his hand on the tome, and a bright flash blinded him.

When vision finally cleared, he was back in the grassy field. Chrom raised an eyebrow. "What happened? Didn't it work?" he asked.

"How long have I been gone?" Robin asked hoarsely.

"Uh…ten seconds?"

Robin blinked. "It felt like forever," he mumbled.

"So, what did you see?" Lucina asked.

Robin looked at his wife…and pulled her into a fierce embrace.

"R-Robin…you're squishing me," the princess squeaked.

"Sorry," Robin said sheepishly, releasing her. "I…I made the right choice, that's all I can say."

The group looked at each other. "Fair enough," Chrom said. "So who's up next?" He took a look at Robin. He looked like he had seen a ghost wherever the tome had taken him.

"Perhaps we should wait until tomorrow, milord?" Frederick suggested.

"Agreed," Chrom replied. The Shepherds exited the Outrealm and were soon on their way back to Ylisse.

"Are you OK?" Lucina asked her husband, who had been silent on the entire trip.

"I…I hope so," Robin chuckled softly. "The first thing I'm going to do when I get back to the castle is hug Morgan…and electrocute Inigo."

"Why would you—No," she gasped, her eyes growing wide. "No wonder you're in shock…are you serious?"

"He kissed her, Lucina."

Lucina sat back into her seat, face grim. "Can I stab him after you're done?" she asked.

"Be my guest." **(12)**

Author's Notes:

1: So, this is a new thing I'm testing out just so that I feel like I'm doing something. I'm going to be adding little Author's notes to my stories (not just this one) to tell you what was/is going through my head as I write these things. Needless to say, there are going to be spoilers for later chapters, but I will not spoil chapters that I haven't released yet. Tell me how you like it!

2: I love Anna. There's tons of situations where she/they can be used to the utmost hilarity. Of course, one Anna also runs the Outrealm Gate. I'm still not sure how or why.

3: Looking back, this is kind of a lame joke. I probably should have just left it out altogether. I would have removed it while putting in these notes, but I've decided to refrain from changing the actual story, since I like to see my progression, or lack thereof, in my writing.

4: I apologize if any of you went insane while reading this part. I just couldn't help myself from putting this scene in my story.

5: Ah, the infamous "naked Chrom" posters. I'm not going to check, but I'm going to guess that there's a fanart featuring the posters.

6: This sentence makes me cringe. It could have definitely been worded better. Furthermore, I think I fudged up the joke. The joke is that Outrealm Anna frequently used the Gate to check other outcomes of her previous business sales (ie, haggling, sales, etc), and is saddened by the fact that she occasionally sold an item for a measly 10 gold pieces lower than what her customer would have paid. I don't think I expressed that joke very clearly with this sentence.

7: I have no idea how the Outrealm Gate is supposed to work, never mind how the Shepherds get to specific worlds, so I pretty much just winged it.

8: ...That would actually be a good idea for a story...

9: I'm pleased with the way this scene turned out. I didn't want to immediately turn Robin into a complete Frankenstein character, so I used Lucina as a sort of counterweight to Robin's obsession. Robin is still a very bitter and distraught man, but he's still able to see reason, thanks to his wife. Once she dies, however, Robin is again consumed by his fruitless desire to destroy Grima.

10: We can only regret the things that we have a say in. I think all of us at one point in our lives have looked back and wondered what would have happened had we done or even said something different. The truth is, most of the time, there is no "perfect" choice. Big choices are scary. Sometimes, even when you did what you thought was best, you look back and second-guess your choice.

11: Reading back on this chapter, I took inspiration from *Frankenstein* without realizing it. Needless to say, this chapter could have been its own series if I did it in a *Frankenstein* style, but I don't think I'd be able to do the classic justice.

12: I like mixing drama and tragedy with humor. I've heard that life isn't like a roller coaster; it's like parallel train tracks that feature both pain and joy. I feel bad for Inigo. He's actually sort of an interesting character when you get down into it. But that doesn't mean I'd want him to get involved with my possible futuristic paradoxical daughter.

Chapter 2: Chapter 2: Tharja's Stalker

To avoid complete and total insanity, I have decided to dub all of the characters in the Outrealm "Bubble". For example, there's Frederick, and then there's Bubble Frederick.

Also, thanks for the reviews! They mean more than you might think.

Got it? Good.

Edit (9/1/13): Author's Notes added.

Well this is…obnoxious. When the Shepherds were trying to see who would be the next to go to the Bubbly Outrealm**(1)** (as Nowi had named it after hearing Robin's account), they simply decided to choose the next lucky/unlucky person by drawing lots. So they wrote a the names of the Shepherds on pieces of paper and put them in a helm. Tharja had tried to put a hex on the helm to take her name out, but unbeknownst to her, Henry was casting a hex that would change all of the papers to his name. Something got screwed up along the way, and all of the names were switched to Tharja's.

"I don't even know what I'm supposed to be doing here," the dark mage mumbled to herself. She had entered the florescent room, and just like Robin had said, she saw dozens of bubbles floating from place to place. An idea suddenly popped into her head. Despite her marriage to Lon'Qu a few years before, she still continued to, ahem, "observe" Robin. **(2)** Her near-obsession with the Shepherd's tactician died down a bit after she met her future daughter, but she still bore a slight animosity towards Lucina.

But if there was a scenario where Robin didn't get married…or if Chrom issued a royal command for Tharja to stalk him…or—Tharja then noticed a specific bubble. It showed a Robin with a…darker smile, and without a wedding ring. The Robin in the bubble was stalking Tharja, who seemed not to notice. *That'll work*, she thought, smiling to herself. She grabbed the bubble.

The room seemed to swirl around Tharja, causing her to stumble around. When the Pegasi finally stopped swirling around her head, she took in the scene. She saw herself, a few years younger, standing in her tent. Tharja recognized the tent as the one she used during the Valmese war. Bubble Tharja was murmuring a spell which, in theory, was supposed to allow her to see through the material of Robin's tent. Agust of wind suddenly rushed into the tent, and Bubble Tharja was shoved to the ground. "You're getting sloppy," Robin noted.

"Wheh! Did you have to be so forceful?" the woman demanded.

Robin gave a thin smile. "I like watching you fall down…you're so…vulnerable."**(3)**

Tharja couldn't believe her eyes. Why the heck couldn't she be in a world where Robin was just as dedicated as she was?

"I admit, when you first started following me, I thought it a little…eccentric," Robin continued. "But then I eventually saw the true beauty of it. Speaking of which, I created a hex that will make every male you see look like me to you. Just think about it." And with another rush of wind, Robin was gone.

Tharja paused, not really knowing how to react to the events that had just played out in front of her. On one hand, Robin had become Tharja's "stalker buddy", but on another hand…she didn't really know if she liked this Robin. She sort of liked the way he would freak out when she would pop out in front of him (Lissa had described it as "a rubbery thing").

The scene suddenly shifted, and it was nighttime. She was at the exact same place, and the tent had changed only minimally, so Tharja figured that only hours had passed. She took a few steps closer and saw Bubble Tharja, who was sleeping. The tent flap opened, and Robin crept inside. He slowly walked towards the sleeping mage, and sat down on the bedroll. He took out something from his pocket—a flash of metal.

Tharja flinched, and ran over to her sleeping self (not that she could stop Robin). Robin quickly cut a strand of the Bubble Tharja's hair, and stuffed it in his pocket. He then sat down on the ground, and stared at the sleeping woman.

If Tharja was caught off-guard during the last scene, then she was completely shocked at this one. She wasn't like the Robin in this dimension, was she? Sure, she casted the occasional hex, and watched him while he slept from time to time, but now that it was playing out in front of…herself, it seemed…wrong.**(4)**

Awhirlwind picked up around the raven-haired enchantress, and in a flash she was in Robin's tent (she could tell from

the chess board and the countless books). It was daytime, and Bubble Tharja was skulking around the tent. Tharja walked closer to see what Bubble Tharja was looking at. She was holding a coat, which Tharja immediately recognized as Robin's. Bubble Tharja clutched the coat to herself, and moved to the tent flap.

"What are you doing?" Robin asked, stepping inside.

Bubble Tharja shrieked and jumped backwards. Robin blocked the tent flap, shutting off her escape. "Is that my coat?" Robin asked, smirking.

"W-what if it is?!" Bubble Tharja replied.

Tharja was surprised at her other self's reaction. She herself would be flustered, of course, but this woman seemed more…frightened.

Robin smiled mischievously. "It's no problem. I cut your nightrobe and used it as material for my journal, so I can both write about you and have a part of you at the same time. Isn't it great?"**(5)**

Bubble Tharja gritted her teeth, shaking in a mixture of fear and anger. "NO!" she shouted.

Robin flinched. "But don't you see, Tharja? This is how it is meant to be! This…this is *fate*."

"Fate this!" Bubble Tharja fired a dark blast at her stalker.

Robin was launched out of the tent, slamming into a oblivious Nowi. "Owww!" the Manakete cried, tears forming in her eyes.

Robin froze. "Uh…sorry?" he said, taken aback.

"Ok!" Nowi said, grinning, her demeanor changing completely. She skipped away to talk to…anyone.

Robin watched Nowi leave him. *Such an innocent little girl*, he thought. He paused. And followed her.**(6)**

Tharja watched as the scene in front of her dissolved into nothingness, leaving her back in the Bubble Room. *What the heck…did I just see?!* She suddenly felt the urge to barf. *That was…beyond disturbing*. She left the Outrealm quickly, running what she saw again and again in her head.

She ran into Robin at the market a few hours later. Needless to say, he freaked out. "Oh! Uh…hey there, Tharja!" the tactician stammered. "Did you have a good time in the Outrealms?"

Tharja decided to scare Robin, just a bit. "I had a delightful time. Who knew that such things could happen?" And with that, she walked away, leaving a nervous Robin behind.

"WEEEEEEE!" a girlish voice shouted. Tharja felt like she had been hit by a cannonball. She sprung to her feet, furious.

"What the heck do you think you're doing?!" she shouted at the offender under her.

"Hahaha! That was fun! Let's do that again!" Nowi said, adjusting her helmet.

Tharja froze. It was quite awkward seeing the dragon-girl after…what she had just seen. Vaike ran up and scooped up the girl. "Sorry 'bout that," he said apologetically. "Hey Stahl! Go long!" He tossed Nowi towards Stahl, who caught her with expert ease. "We call it Nowi-ball," Vaike said, grinning.

A figure quickly grabbed Nowi from Stahl, who was preparing to launch her over his head. "Steal!" Stahl shouted.

"Aw, Donnel, we were having so much fun!" Nowi protested as Donnel ran through the streets of Ylisse, with her in tow. Her husband simply groaned and shook his head.

Tharja watched the couple flee from the market. *What an odd girl*, she mused. A familiar feeling prickled in her mind, and she smiled darkly. *I wonder what time she goes to sleep…*.**(7)**

...**Yeah, that was creepy. Review if you have the time, and feel free to leave a suggestion on what scenario you want to see!**

Author's Notes:

1: Hey, I needed a name for the Outrealm, and Nowi is always a great scapegoat for my idiotic names.

2: I really don't get why so many people love RobinxTharja. She freaking creeps me out, and has much better support convos with Lon'qu. I also find it creepy how she still has this weird obsession with Robin, even if she's married. ...kind of like Cordelia and Chrom...

3: Oh, good gosh, no. *shudders*

4: Honestly, now that I think about it, Tharja wouldn't find this wrong. She would probably find it romantic.

5: Again, let's be honest here: You probably couldn't write on nightrobe fabric.

6: ...If there was a fanfic award for "most likely to be arrested", I'd win in an instant.

7: ...what the heck did I just write?!

Chapter 3: Chapter 3: Frederick's Trials

Again, thank you all for the reviews! Critiques are also greatly appreciated!

This story is a bit of a different format, since it's more a story being told.

Thanks to mooman23 for the suggestion!

Also, I've decided to call the children by what I assume are their Japanese names, so it might seem a bit odd.

I'm still writing the Lucina chapter. It's going to be a larger one.

Edit (9/19/13): Author's Notes added

"—and *that's* the *real* reason the chicken crossed the road!" Robin finished. The group of children in front of him simply stared at the tactician.

"When's Frederick coming back?" Shinshia asked, playing with her pegasai dolls.

"Yeah! He lets us play Bear!" Nn agreed.

"THE WARRIOR'S BLOOD IN MY VEINS YEARNS FOR BATTLE!" Udo shouted.

Robin massaged his temples. Frederick's name had been drawn to be the next person to go to the Bubbly Outrealm, and since the knight was the one who usually took care of the children (including his own child, Dejeru), Robin was stuck with babysitting. "He'll probably be back in a bit, since he left half an hour ago," he assured the bored children. *One hyperactive child is enough…and mine is just a few years younger than I.* ***(1)***

"When is Morgan going to come?" Rukina asked.

Robin blinked, confused. "She went with Lucina to the market. Frederick will come back before they will."

Rukina shook her head. "I mean baby Morgan."

Robin froze. "Uh…I, uh…"

"Yes, Robin, when will our granddaughter come?" a voice said from behind Robin.

Robin quickly turned around. "Hello, Sumia. Did you come to take care of the children?" he asked hopefully.

Sumia smiled. "I couldn't. You look like you're having so much fun!" she insisted. "But seriously; I'm not getting any younger."

"Oh, really? I haven't noticed! You look at young as you did when I first met you." **(2)**

Sumia rolled her eyes. "My collection of toddlers is not yet complete, Robin," she said sternly. "I suggest you get to work on it as soon as possible." **(3)**

"Yes ma'am," Robin whimpered. Just then, Frederick entered the room. "THANK GODS!" Robin shouted. "Frederick, ol' pal!"

The brown-haired man gave the tactician a look. "Ah, Robin, could I speak to you?" he asked. "Privately?" he added.

Robin raised an eyebrow. Had he seen something that had troubled him when he went to the Outrealm? In any case, at least he didn't have to listen to a high-pitched Owain rant about his sword hand. "Of course," he replied. He stood up, leaving Sumia to take care of the children.

The two men entered Robin's room. After Frederick closed the door, Robin asked, "Is it about what you saw in the Outrealms?"

Frederick nodded gravely. "It is about Lord Chrom."

Robin nodded thoughtfully. "I see. Go on."

Frederick shifted in the seat that was built to hold men who weren't wearing armor. "…What I saw…made me rethink my charge as a knight."

"Hm…I see," Robin murmured. Frederick was famous for his undying devotion to his lord, and for him to question his place was quite surprising. "So what did you see, Frederick?"

The man across from Robin took a breath, and told his tale…

When I entered the…what did Nowi call it?

[The Bubble Room.]**(4)**

Ah, yes. When I entered the Bubble Room, I really had nothing that I wished to see. Even on the way to the Outrealm Gate I couldn't think of anything that kept my attention. I simply touched a bubble at random.

Just as you told us, I was instantaneously transported to another time. I couldn't tell you exactly when it was, but considering the lack of men that we had, I suspect that it was during the war with Plegia, before Lady Emmeryn 's… disappearance.

[Thank Naga we found her.]

Indeed. In any case, I found my 'other' going to Lord Chrom's tent, as he had requested.

Bubble Frederick nearly ran into Robin in his haste to get to his lord's tent. "Apologies, my friend!" he called, as Robin picked up the books that he had dropped. Bubble Frederick then ran right into a wall.

No, wait. That was Kellam. "Er, excuse me," Bubble Frederick said sheepishly, before taking off again.

Within seconds, the knight had arrived at his destination. Someone who wasn't used to the Shepherd's camp might have missed it. The tent was no different from any of the others. Bubble Frederick cleared his throat and walked in. "Milord!" he announced.

"You're late, Frederick," Chrom said dryly.

Bubble Frederick bowed, ashamed. "My sincerest regrets, Lord Chrom."

"Speaking of which, I want to change my title."

[*Whoa, whoa, whoa. How do you get a better title than Prince? He was basically a king. What, did he want to kill Emm himself?"]*

No. His preferences were a bit more…eccentric.

Bubble Frederick blinked. "Change it, milord?"

"From on now, I shall be called Super Naga."

"Super Naga?! Sir, that would be a grievous case of blasphemy!"

"No, wait….Super Naga Lord." **(5)**

[HAHAHAHAHAHA!]

I fail to see the amusing part of this.

[It's just…Really?! That seems like something a drunken Owain would come up with!]

That's exactly what I thought.

The knight's eye twitched. "Pardon, milord—"

"—Super Naga Lord."

"Super Naga Lord…the people would most certainly object to that title. Naga is a deity; she might strike you down if you chose to take her name."

Chrom thought for a second. "How about Super Grima Lord?"

Bubble Frederick emerged from the tent half an hour later, his head as red as a tomato. "Hey there," Sully said, walking up. "How about a sparring match? Loser buys lunch."

"I'm afraid that I have…other...duties," Bubble Frederick replied carefully.

Sully smirked. "Oh, yeah? What kind of 'duties'? Are you checking the road for pebbles again?"

Bubble Frederick gave Sully a look. "Do you perhaps recall the…recruitment posters that I made a while ago?"

Sully burst into laughter. "Every Shepherd knows about the posters! You didn't do a very good job of destroying them."

The blue-armored man sighed. "Prince, er, *Extra* Super Grima Lord Chrom has decided that he liked the posters after all, and wants them mass-produced throughout Ylisse." **(6)**

"Oh, so he had a change of heart?"

"And he wants me to be next to him in the poster…in the same depiction as he."

Sully stopped laughing. "Y-you're pulling my leg, right? Haha, hilarious." Bubble Frederick looked at her. "Oh, gods, you're serious," she mumbled.

[…]

…

[Whoa.]

Whoa indeed.

Bubble Frederick nodded gravely. "I am. Now if you'll excuse me…" The knight stepped past Sully, and left to carry out his orders.

Of course, I was shocked at this point. I felt sick, more sick than when Anna had traded the posters to her sister in our world.

[And with good reason!]

The scene changed at this point, thank Naga.

The Shepherds were on the move again. There had been some reports of bandits in a nearby area, and they had decided to assist the villagers. "Oh, Freddy?" Chrom called from the center of the group.

Bubble Frederick flinched. "Yes, mi—Extra Super Grima Lord?" he asked, gritting his teeth.

"Would you be so kind as to have the Shepherds sing for me?"

Bubble Frederick and Robin looked at each other. "Really, Chrom? Sing? I don't know if—"

"EXTRASUPER GRIMALORD COMMANDS YOU!" Chrom yelled, silencing Robin. He tossed a balled up piece of paper at Bubble Frederick, who caught it.

Bubble Frederick unfurled the paper and read it. "Milord! This song is the hymn of our enemies!" he exclaimed.

"SING!"

The rest of the Shepherds walked closer to Bubble Frederick to read the paper. Everyone was quite disturbed. "Very well, milord," Bubble Frederick said weakly. He cleared his throat.

"You know you love me, I know you care…"

[No.]

Yes…

[How…how could he be so cruel?!]

It was with great pain that I had to watch myself sing 'Infant'.

[I couldn't imagine how horrible that could have been…] ***(7)***

Thankfully, the Shepherds were finally able to stop singing when they arrived at the village. The village seemed like any other; the only defining factor being the pillars of smoke rising from burning buildings. "Kaykay!" Chrom said girlishly. "Let's go tear some heads."

The Shepherds charged into the fray, cutting down any bandits that they saw. The brigands stood no chance, and soon fled from the warriors. Suddenly, Chrom's cry resonated throughout the villiage. Bubble Frederick instinctively rushed towards the sound, his heart racing. He saw Chrom on the ground. Fearing for his lord's life, he called for assistance as he stabbed a thief that was foolish enough to attempt to sneak up on the man. "Milord! Are you alright?!" Bubble Frederick asked, offering his hand to Chrom.

"I…I tripped. My shirt is dirty!" Chrom sobbed, tears running down his face.

For the first time in his service as Chrom's guardian, Bubble Frederick felt the urge to strike down the prince. "Would you like me to lend you my armor?" he asked, glaring at the blue-haired man.

"Yo, I got this, dawg," Chrom said, standing up. "Ok, ok, fun's over. Everyone go home," he called to brigand and Shepherd alike. "You there," he said, pointing to a village woman. "Make me a shirt. And put some sparkles in them."

[…'yo, I got this, dawg'?]

Yes, this was only one of the many…oddities that came out of his mouth.

Luckily for Chrom, the bandits were either dead or had surrendered, and one of the villagers had an extra coat (though the lord was quite disappointed at its lack of 'bling').

After an hour or so, the Shepherds found themselves crossing a ravine via a bridge without side guards. It was getting late in the afternoon, and they were all tired. Only the danger of falling kept them awake. "HEY, I JUST MET YOU!" Chrom suddenly shouted. The rest of the group flinched, some nearly falling into the abyss below. "AND THIS IS CRAAAAAYZY!" the girl/man continued. "BUT HERE'S MY EMBLEM! SO CATCH IT SULLY!"**(8)** And with that, he tossed the legendary Fire Emblem—

[Why did he have the Fire Emblem with him? I thought we didn't get it until later?]

Either the scene had switched to after Emmeryn had given it to us, or the Outrealm wanted my heart to cease beating. ***(9)***

—at the red-haired woman. Sully yelped, scrambling to catch the item. Unfortunately, she was unsuccessful, and it fell into the rocks thousands of feet below. "PRECIOUS!" a voice yelled from below them.

All of the eyes of the Shepherds turned to Chrom, who was looking down into the ravine. "Huh," he said. "You need to work on your catching, Sully. Like, OMG."

Bubble Frederick looked down. It would be suicide to allow Chrom to continue leadership in this state. There was only be one thing Bubble Frederick could do.

Well, maybe one thing, but it was sure as heck the thing he wanted to do. He dismounted his horse.

"Leave us," Bubble Frederick said, his voice like hooves on gravel. The other Shepherds moved forward, as they were almost at the other side of the ravine.

"Nuh-uh," Chrom protested. "Stay here. I'm in charge."

Bubble Frederick gripped Chrom's shoulder. "Do you feel in charge?" Robin quickly ushered the others out of the area and into the forest.

When they were out of sight, Chrom replied in a small whisper, "I've given you all the bear meat that you can stomach."

"And this gives you power over me?" the other man asked, suddenly seeming a lot taller than before.

Chrom began to shake slightly. "What is this?" he peeped.

"Your food and your leadership have been important," Bubble Frederick replied. "Until now."

"What are you?" Chrom asked, now completely terrified.

"I'm not the knight Ylisse deserves, but the one it needs." Bubble Frederick said gravely, drawing his sword and pointing it at Chrom's neck. "You bring the crowns and heads of Plegia's nobles and captains to the camp. You parody horrible songs. You endanger the safety of the Shepherds. You lose the Fire Emblem. I've chosen my fate carefully, Chrom. Perhaps you should have done the same."

Chrom took a step back. "Frederick! This…this is mutiny! This is madness!"

Bubble Frederick lowered his sword and looked behind him. Sully stood there, watching the two men. She nodded.

Bubble Frederick smiled darkly. "Madness? This! Is! Ylissia!" With the power of a hundred raging bulls, he kicked Chrom square in the chest, sending him sprawling into the depths below.

He landed with a sickening *crunch.* The same voice from below that had spoken earlier spoke again. "What'ss in it'sss pocketsss?" it said. **(10)**

Bubble Frederick mounted his horse again and cautiously walked to Sully. "Ylissa?" the red-haired woman asked.

The knight shrugged. "Vowels carry longer," he explained.

Sully nodded with a smile. "Ah."

When Frederick had finished his story, he leaned back in his seat. "So, what are your opinions on what I saw?" he asked Robin.

"Well, first of all, you've been going to way too many stage dramas."

"Agreed."

"But why did this make you question your role as a knight?"

Frederick sighed. "During the war, my entire purpose was to protect Lord Chrom. I never stopped once to think, 'am I working for a man, or for Ylisse?' If Chrom had indeed done something to threaten our safety, would I have stopped him?"

Robin nodded. "I often thought of that myself, admittedly; not only for him, but for myself. I could have easily set up a tactical maneuver that would have gotten all of the Shepherds killed, except for me, simply because of their absolute faith in me." He smiled. "But if I remember correctly, 'Frederick the Wary,' you were the one who objected to Chrom taking me with him in the first place."

Frederick smiled, a rare sight. "True enough."

Robin stood up. "I wouldn't worry about your loyalties, Frederick. This isn't all on you, and I think all of the Shepherds need that reminder every once in a while."

Frederick stood up as well. "Thank you, my friend. Now, if you'll excuse me, I have to go entertain the children."

Robin chuckled. "And I have to talk to Lucina about completing Sumia's 'collection'."

"Ah, I remember that talk. Sully was quite unhappy with the fact that she was being pressured by the queen to have a child. But I was afraid that Sumia would serve bear until she had a little Kjelle."

"God any advice for convincing Lucina?"

Frederick nodded and left the room. He came back a few minutes later with a wine bottle. "One of the finest wines that you will ever taste," he said proudly. "Worked great with Sully."

Robin took the bottle gratefully. "Thank you, Frederick. Hopefully she can't hold her liquor," he joked.

He would soon learn that Lucina could in fact hold her liquor. **(11)**

Pop culture references for the win!

...yeah, I'm sorry about that. I really couldn't resist in this case.

1: Oh, good gosh, the names...the NAMES...Who could read this without looking them up? It was a necessary evil...

2. I'm not going to lie, I probably got this line from my nephew. Xavier, if you're reading this, you *know* that this is totally you.

3. Darth Sumia...ruler of grandchildren...Someone write this!

4. Not tired of this name yet? I sure am.

5. TeamFourStar reference! I got one in there! Haha! Ah, taking from people with more talent than I is fun...

6. Not completely sure how this would work...looking at how extensive the Fire Emblem timeline is, they should be around our technological era, if not even further. But then again, they do face a world threatening-crisis every thousand years.

7: For some reason, I don't feel that this joke really connected. But it's kind of used as a transition, I guess...

8: Think about this scene for a second. Really think about it. Now make the fanart.

9: Passing over plot holes for the win.

10: That's right, in less than 500 hundred words, I linked a Lord of the Rings references (or two of the same reference), a The Dark Knight Rises reference, a The Dark Knight reference, and a 300 reference. Sooner or later I'm going to have to outdo myself on this one.

11: I would have paid money to see Robin try to get Lucina drunk. But, alas, they're not real. Yet. *Lightning flash*

Chapter 4: Chapter 4: Panne's Addiction

For some reason, I was having a hard time writing this week. My internet was down for a few days that kind of took priority. But I wanted to post a fic a week, so here ya go.

Panne was not amused. When she had agreed to be sent to the Outrealms, she had been promised some of Robin's carrot stew. Only when she had arrived to the Outrealm Gate was she informed that she would be receiving the soup on her return.

Oh, well. At least this meadow is nice, she thought. Panne lay down on the moist grass. She began to feel drowsy, surrounded by the warm sun and the cool wind. Her eyes began to flutter closed…

**$ %!* Panne thought, looking around at the florescent room in which she was in. The second she had fallen asleep, she had entered the Bubble Room. She wanted to sleep, but with the pulsing light around her, she couldn't even begin to relax. She yawned, stretching her arms.

Pop!

Oops.

The walls shifted and changed; Panne found herself in the large dining tent that the Shepherds had used during the war with Valm. Robin was stirring something in the large pot at the side of the tent. Panne walked over, instantly feeling hungry. Sure enough, the tactician was cooking carrot stew. Robin casually looked around him, for some reason covering his head with his cloak. He finished cooking, and began to put the stew into canteens.

Just then, Bubble Panne walked into the tent, wearing Gerome's mask. The mask didn't obscure her identity very well, as her long rabbit ears were still plainly visible.

Robin looked up. "You stole Gerome's mask?" he asked.

Bubble Panne nodded quickly, her eyes shifting from side to side. She was shaking, as if cold or anxious. "Just hand over the goods, man-spawn."

Robin smirked evilly. "My price has gone up. It's 1200 GP now."

Bubble Panne's eyes grew wide. "I've already been paying you my entire soldier's salary!" she hissed.

Robin shrugged. "Oh, well, then. I bet your son would like a taste of this stew…"

"NO!" the Tangul yelled. She froze, hoping that no one had heard her cry. "He…he doesn't need to get involved in this too…I'll pay the money." She took a small bag of bullion out of her pocket. "I'll pay the rest later."

Robin chuckled as he counted the GP. "You better…I'm not as good at keeping secrets as they say…" He took three of the canteens and gave them to Bubble Panne. "Nice doing business with you."

Bubble Panne murmured a reply, gripping the canteens like they were her dying children. She rushed to her tent and laid the canteens down on her bedroll. She hurriedly opened one of the bottles, her hands shaking. She poured the contents into her mouth, and she began to slowly calm down. She took a few breaths before walking over to her desk. The other Shepherds weren't sure why she needed a desk, but they had never bothered to ask. Only Robin knew Bubble Panne's secret. She placed her beaststone against the bottom of the desk, and a small compartment opened at the side. She placed the other two canteens inside of the compartment and shut it.

"Ahem."

Bubble Panne flinched and turned around. "Oh! Hello…Gerome," she replied carefully.

The man walked to Bubble Panne and quickly ripped his mask off of her. "I'll be taking this back," he growled, putting it on. He walked out of the tent in a huff.

Bubble Panne breathed a sigh of relief. Gerome hadn't noticed her carrot stew. She looked around the tent again. She had sold many of her belongings to buy more stew.

She then remembered that she owed Robin money. She groaned inwardly and sat down on the ground. Not for the first time, she cursed herself for bringing shame to the Tangul name. She was addicted to the carrot stew. At first it was just a bowl here and there—maybe as a way to spend time with the other Shepherds, or sometimes Robin would have some left over. But soon she began to eat a bowl every day. The Shepherds would tease her about it sometimes, but they assumed it was just her favorite food. Eventually, she needed a drink of it two or three times a day if she was to function properly.

Bubble Panne buried her face into her hands. Money. She needed money. There was one thing she hadn't sold…no, she had to push such thoughts out her mind. It had been passed down through her kind for generations…which made it very expensive. She walked over to her bag, reached inside of it, and took out a large Tangul talisman. It was layered with gold plating, with a beaststone-like gem in the center. Bubble Panne carefully weighed the heirloom, estimating the price that it would sell for. It would certainly be enough to pay Robin back, at the very least.

She quickly slipped the talisman into her coat, which was hanging on her desk. She put the coat on and exited the tent. The other Shepherds would raise an eyebrow at the sight of a Tangul wearing a coat, but she hoped that they wouldn't ask any actual questions.

She managed to stay out of sight until she reached a nearby market. As she always did, she asked one of the merchants whether anyone was selling carrot soup. No one was, meaning that Robin was still the only distributer. She eventually found a jewel merchant. "I want to pawn this," she said, placing the talisman in front of the merchant.

The man took the item and inspected it. "Sorry, can't take this," he said quickly, handing Bubble Panne back the expensive talisman.

"Wha-what?! Why not?!" she demanded.

"Tangul talismans are said to have magical curses, and a human who owns one is said to die a horrible death," the merchant said, suddenly becoming very nervous.

Bubble Panne groaned. The Tangul had made up that rumor to keep humans from stealing their belongings. They didn't think that man-spawns would actually believe it. "It's not cursed," she promised.

"Eh…better be safe than sorry," the merchant replied, shrugging.

Bubble Panne wordlessly took the talisman. For the next hour, she walked around, trying to find someone who would buy the item. Unfortunately, the whole market seemed to know about the fabled curse.

As she walked back to camp, Bubble Panne weighed her limited options. She couldn't barter with Robin; he only accepted gold. Robin also counted heavy interest, so each day that she didn't pay him back was a day that she would never be able to. An idea came to her mind. Anna. Anna had recently established herself as a sort of black market dealer. Bubble Panne saw other Shepherds go in and out of her tent frequently, though nobody said anything about it. She would probably buy the talisman for much less than it was worth, but she would buy it.

Bubble Panne quickly made her way to Anna's tent. She had been in there once, to find out if she sold carrot stew. Surprisingly, she said that she didn't, leading Bubble Panne to believe that she and Robin were working together.

Bubble Panne cleared her throat. "Anna?" she called. "Are you there?"

Anna called back from inside the tent. "Oh! Come in!"

The Tangul cautiously stepped inside. Anna had somehow developed the astounding ability to set up shop wherever the Shepherds went. She also had the largest tent in the camp. She had racked weapons along the walls of the tent, stacked clothes in one corner, and had a bulging chest full of food. "I want to sell this," Bubble Panne said, showing Anna the talisman.

Anna smirked. "Robin said you'd be here," she said mischievously. She looked over the talisman. "Four thousand GP," she said finally.

The woman with the rabbit ears thought for a while. Three thousand was more than she expected to get, but the talisman was obviously worth more than that. "Five thousand," she countered.

Anna smiled and shook her head. "Four thousand or nothing. Robin told me about your…financial situation."

Bubble Panne resisted the urge to turn into her beast form and tear Anna's head from her body. "…fine," she grunted, handing over the talisman.

Anna happily counted out the gold and handed a pouch to Bubble Panne. "Come again!" she called as Panne left the tent.

In the next hour, Bubble Panne paid off the rest of her debt to Robin and bought a couple of more canteens of stew, knowing that she would need it after the ordeal with the talisman. She sat in her tent, drinking all of the stew that she had. When she had finally downed the last bottle, she laid down on the bedroll. Feeling drowsy, she began to rest. *I really have to stop this addiction*, she thought as her consciousness faded.

She woke up to a scream. Yarne was standing above her, screaming his lungs off. "MOM!" he yelped. "YOU'VE BEEN DOING THE CARROT?!"

Bubble Panne shot up. She wished she hadn't. The hangover had come. "This isn't what it looks like," she insisted.

Yarne shouted something that was lost in his stream of tears. He ran out of the tent just as Chrom was stepping in, having heard the commotion. Chrom watched Yarne flee the area. "What was that about?" he asked. He then saw the canteens. "Oh, my gods!" he yelled.

The next few hours were a blur for Bubble Panne. Within minutes, the entire camp knew about her secret. Yarne refused to come out of a small hole that he had dug. It was eventually decided by Chrom that Bubble Panne join a rehab group that they would form. Robin and Anna were never seen again (though some claim that they can be seen in a faraway magical land known as Los Angeles).

Bubble Panne sat on a bench in a tent. The only other people at the rehab center was Gaius, who was fidgeting and shaking from his sugar withdrawal, and Tharja, who had been going to Robin constantly for …something.

"Lolipopcreampuffsugarplumsweetbreadcandycane," Gaius mumbled to himself.

The tent flap across from Bubble Panne and Gaius opened. "Hello, my friends," Libra said, his voice calm and soothing. "I hear that there are some things that are troubling you. My name is Doctor Libra, and this is my assistant—"

"Nyahahahaha!" Henry laughed happily. "Wow, you guys are pretty screwed up! I don't think there's anything we can do to fix your deadpan brains."

Bubble Panne groaned. It was going to be a long recovery.

...yeah, probably the worst chapter so far. The pacing is pretty off, mostly because I just wanted to get it over with. The real Panne gets very little activity here, not even a closing scene.

On another note, feel free to suggest scenarios! I came up with a few, but some of them seem like separate fics.

Bye for now!

Chapter 5: Chapter 5: Lucina's Choice

Well, it's here! The one you've all been waiting for!

...and man, did writing this one hurt. I wanted to cut this story short so many times...

But I (kinda) got through it! Hope you enjoy it!

"—and whatever you do, remember: it's only a scenario; you made a different choice," Robin finished.

Lucina smiled, touched by her husband's consideration for her possible reactions. She had both dreaded and anticipated the day when she would find out what would have happened had she killed Robin a few years ago. Her heartbeat was abnormally quick, and Robin had been trying to ease her fears. "I know, Robin. I'll be fine. I just want to know."

The tactician nodded. "Alright, just be careful. And if you need to talk to us—to me—afterwards, please do."

"As long as our daughter doesn't get married to Inigo in that timeline, I think I'll be OK," Lucina said, laughing softly.

"Don't remind me," Robin said dryly. "I still have nightmares."

"We're here, your majesties!" a voice announced. Aservant quickly opened the door to the coach in which the two were riding. Chrom had some negotiations to handle, so he had sent Robin and Lucina on by themselves. On the ground of "if I have sit in a stuffy setting all day, you have to too", he gave them a form of transportation fit for a king, despite their objections.

"For the last time, Thomas, call us by our names," Lucina replied, stepping out of the wagon.

"Yes, princess Lucina! I'll be waiting for you in this realm."

Once the couple had transported to the desired Outrealm, they resumed talking. "I'm never going to get used to being called 'prince'," Robin muttered.

"Formalities are hard to break," Lucina agreed. None of the Shepherds allowed royal titles, preferring to think of the other soldiers as equals. "Well, there it is…"

Robin gave his wife's shoulder a quick squeeze. "Good luck," he murmured.

Lucina nodded, and placed her hand on the book. She was instantly transported to the room (or realm, or whatever it was; no one knew for sure) and began to look for the reality that she had almost made. Ignoring the other bubbles, she wandered around. *Isn't it here?* She thought to herself. *Oh, there it is.* She hesitated. Did she really want to know what would have happened? Would it only bring nightmares for months to come? But no…she had to see. She gently placed her hand against the translucent sphere, which showed her standing over a slain Robin.

In seconds, she saw her husband, standing in a field of flowers. She couldn't help but smile. Seeing him always gave her a feeling of hope for a better future. She then saw Bubble Lucina, her knuckles white from gripping Falchion. Lucina saw herself open and close her mouth several times, trying to begin the conversation that would end in Robin's death. Finally, Robin spoke. "Yes, Lucina?" he asked softly.

Bubble Lucina flinched, startled. "Oh, I, um…Could I speak to you for a second?" she asked.

Robin turned around and smiled. "That's what you're doing right now, isn't it?" he said with a smirk.

Bubble Lucina nodded, looking at the ground. "I…I'd like to talk to you about Chrom…about my father. I never really got to spend that much time with him, but I do have memories…from when I was a child…before he…died."

Robin nodded sadly. He wasn't sure why she was bringing this up, but quite a bit of his conversations with the Shepherds began in a vague context. "I see…"

"He was always brave…mother always told me story after story about his courageous feats. He was kind, also. Everyone loved him…and people say that he stood strong until the…until the very end. I always dreamed of meeting him again…spending time with him…and I'm so thankful that I can do that now. But...I'm so afraid of losing him. He's a great man,

and a great father…I can't allow him to be taken away."

Robin took a step towards his fiancé. "I feel the same way. Everyone does. And I promise you: I will do everything in my power to keep him with us."

Bubble Lucina swallowed, desperately trying to keep the tears out of her eyes. "I…I'm so sorry. Please forgive me." In one clean, practiced movement, she drew Falchion.

Robin sprang back instinctively, his face showing his utter shock. "Lucina?!"

"S-stay where you are, Robin! This is the only way; I must do this!" the blue-haired woman cried.

"Why the heck are you doing this?!"

Bubble Lucina gritted her teeth. "In my future…you…You are my father's murderer."

"What reason do I have to kill Chrom?! This is insane!

"All I knew is that he was going to be killed by his closest friend…and when I saw the bond that the two of you share…I figured that the reports were false…But after today…after what happened, I now see why. Validar has complete and total power over you. He's going to make you kill my father, and I don't have any time left."

Robin raised his hands, trying to get Lucina to calm down. "Lucina, wait," he said, struggling to keep his voice level.

"You and father have always said that we could change our destinies. And if I have to kill to do that, then so be it. I…I'm so sorry, Robin. I know this is murder, I…I know that."

"Lucina, you don't have to—"

"DON'T!" the woman shouted, tears streaming down her face. "This is hard enough as it is…I don't want to make you feel any pain…please, if my father is truly your friend…don't resist."

Robin closed his eyes. A few seconds passed, and he looked at the sword in front of him. He smiled. "Alright, then. My life is in your hands…it always has been."

Bubble Lucina felt her hands shaking. "Stop it! Don't…don't give me that look! We were supposed to get married! Don't you see how difficult this is?! If there was any other way…"

"Lucina…I've always been prepared to give my life for Chrom…and for you."

The lord felt her heart break even more, the tears running freely now.

"All I ask…is that you won't give in to despair. I want you to find someone else…someone who will love you. Give me your word that you'll be happy…it's all I've ever wanted for you…"

Bubble Lucina felt a resurgence of anguish. "No…nonono…Please, stop…"

Robin let out a sigh. "I'm ready. Challenge your fate."

She gripped her sword. "WAIT!" a voice called from behind her. Chrom. *I'm sorry, Father…Robin…please forgive me…because I can never forgive myself.* She charged, thrusting Falchion into her loved one's chest.

Robin died instantly, a smile still on his face as blood ran down his stomach.

"NO!" Chrom yelled, pushing past Lucina. He grabbed Robin. "Open your eyes, Robin! OPEN YOUR EYES!" He shook his friend, but there was no breath. He wept for a few minutes, leaving Lucina to contemplate what she had done as the rest of the Shepherds came out of their tents to find out what was going on.

Lucina realized that tears were flowing down her cheeks. Watching herself threatening Robin was difficult enough, but to see herself end his life…she suddenly heard her other self's thoughts.

What have I done? Bubble Lucina thought. *I…I killed him…my purpose for waking up in the morning…How could I be so…oh, gods…Morgan.* She turned around, about to dash towards Morgan's tent.

"Mother?" a shaky voice said. Morgan stood in front of her father's murderer. She looked from Robin, to Bubble Lucina's sword, to Bubble Lucina.

"Morgan please—, " her mother began, desperate to explain herself.

"NO! WHY WOULD YOU DO THIS?!" the girl shouted, bolting from the flower field, which was now stained with scarlet blood.

Bubble Lucina took a step, trying to chase after her, but Chrom pulled her back. "Lucina," he said gravely, his eyes blazing with fury. "Why, in Naga's name, would you go through with it?!" Bubble Lucina simply shook her head back and forth, unable to say anything in her defense. Seeing his daughter's silence, Chrom released Lucina and picked up Robin's corpse, his blood smearing on Chrom's clothes. "There's no time to send him back to Ylisse for a proper burial. We'll have to bury him here." The rest of the Shepherds nodded, and Frederick and Gregor left to dig a grave, while Lissa and Maribelle went with Chrom to prepare Robin's body.

Bubble Lucina saw the hardly concealed glares from her friends, and they hurt more than a sword wound. She kept her head down, unable to bring herself to look anyone in the eye. She bumped into Tharja, whose glare made her fear for her life.

She didn't know how long it took her to get to Robin's tent. It felt like an eternity. When she stepped inside the tent, an overwhelming sense of loss and regret filled her heart, forcing her to collapse to the ground. She wept openly on the floor of her fiancé's tent. She grabbed one of Robin's coats and gripped it to her body, trying to feel an inch of warmth, despite the utter feeling of frost in her stomach. "I'm sorry," she cried. "I'm so sorry…" She rocked back and forth, tears streaming down her face.

Lucina couldn't bear to watch any more. "Stop it," she murmured, suddenly feeling very alone. "I want to leave!"

The Outrealm almost answered her wish. The scene shifted, and she saw all of the Shepherds gathered together. Lucina passed through the group, where she saw her father, giving a speech about Robin.

"—but despite his antics," Chrom continued, "—he was, and always will be, one of us." He paused. "He would hate a melodramatic speech, wouldn't he?" He laughed sadly. "Long story short, he listened to us at camp, and he kept us alive in war, all the while smirking while he did it."

The rest of the group nodded in agreement. Nowi and Lissa burst into tears. Bubble Lucina, wearing a cloak that covered her face, simply looked away. Libra said a prayer over Robin, thanking Naga for the time that they had with him, and asking for a better life for him. Frederick and Stahl lowered Robin's wrapped body into the newly-dug grave. "We didn't have a gravestone, so this will have to do," Chrom said sadly. He and Gregor pushed a boulder to the head of the grave. Chrom looked up and nodded to Bubble Lucina.

With trembling hands, she took out Robin's famous purple-black coat (cleansed of blood) and draped it over the boulder. Tharja and Henry murmured some words, producing a spell that would protect the grave from destruction. It took them quite a long time to finish, and when they did, both of them were exhausted.

Bubble Lucina was the first one to leave the grave, and she went straight back to her own tent. She lowered her hood, her face stained from a night of sobs. She sat down on her bedroll and clutched her knees to her chest. Many times, Robin had seen her upset or depressed and had done something, anything, to make her smile again. She shook her head, trying to rid herself of the memory. She did what she had to, after all. And Robin hadn't fought back; it wasn't like she had—

Murderer.

She threw herself onto the bedroll, berating herself, wishing that she was dead. How could she have killed him? She was alone now; none of the other Shepherds would ever trust her again. The glint of Falchion caught her eye, and sadness was replaced with hate. The blade was taunting her, laughing at her, daring her to thrust the blade into her own heart. She gripped the hilt, and with a roar, she threw it into the wall of her tent, tearing a hole in the fabric. She didn't care where the legendary sword would land. She never wanted to see it again. The only reason she didn't turn the blade upon herself was because Robin would have wanted her to defeat Validar, and eventually Grima. Maybe she would die in the fight, and if so, good. If she survived, well, then she had no further reason to wake up in the morning.

The scene shifted again, and the sound of battle drums rumbled like thunder through the air. Bubble Lucina was preparing for the battle against Validar. The glances from the other Shepherds never left. Why would they trust her? Robin was held in extremely high esteem among them. He listened to them when they needed someone to talk to, he aided them with small tasks, and he got them through each battle alive.

And that was the other issue. Yes, Robin was a threat, but he was also possibly the greatest tactician in history. They were at a huge disadvantage without him. Chrom held a war counsel to decide their course of action. It didn't go very

well. Chrom had tried to use the same basic tactics that Robin had used, but he simply couldn't quite understand the tactician's reasoning. In the end, he simply decided that he and Bubble Lucina would fight Validar, while the rest of the Shepherds would hold off his soldiers.

"Lucina," Chrom said, stepping into her tent.

"Father," the woman replied, not looking at him.

Chrom paused, as if trying to figure out what to say. "I understand what you had to do, and—"

"Please."

Chrom blinked. "What?"

Bubble Lucina gripped a silver blade, much different from Falchion, but she had gotten somewhat used to it. "Let's…not talk about this. Please," she said softly.

Chrom placed his hand on his daughter's shoulder. "Lucina, I need you at your best today, and you'll be weaker with this burden of guilt upon you."

Bubble Lucina laughed bitterly. "Do you really think anything you say will make me feel better? No, only death will make this pain go away." She looked away again. "I didn't even get to say goodbye to my daughter."

Chrom sighed. A few days earlier, as they were approaching The Dragon's Table, Morgan had packed her few belongings in the middle of the night and had left. Bubble Lucina had begged Chrom to let her go find her daughter, but both of them knew that the only way she was going to be found was if she wanted to be found. Knowing that he could do no more, Chrom left the tent.

As Lucina watched, she felt her heart drop even more, if that was even possible. *I lost both Robin…and Morgan…No, wait…This is not my world. Robin is alive…and Morgan is with him…Everything is fine…*

An hour later, Bubble Lucina and Chrom approached Validar. The dark wizard turned from the altar. "So…you killed my son to prevent your father's death, eh?" he said, scoffing. "Well, no matter. You will all fall here!"

Lucina watched as Bubble Lucina and Chrom dueled against Validar. In but a few seconds, it was obvious that Bubble Lucina was fighting much worse than she should have been. The rest of the Shepherds weren't faring much better. Without the orders and tactics that Robin had provided, they had to rely on brute strength, which was a problem, because not only were their opponents resilient, but they also had the strength of numbers.

"HAHAHA! What's wrong, your majesty?" Validar taunted, firing a dark spell at Bubble Lucina. "Falling short without your husband to lead you?"

Bubble Lucina barely dodged the attack, not replying to Validar's words. Chrom lunged at the mage, who ducked and jumped back.

"Oh, that's right. Your daughter's gone too, now, isn't she? What a waste of potential. We might have her become a servant of Grima after this is all over. Oh, wouldn't that be a hoot…"

Bubble Lucina angrily slashed at Validar, who countered with a dark orb. "Shut up!" she yelled.

Validar laughed maniacally. "Fool! You cannot change fate! Grima will rise aga—!" His words were stopped short as Chrom's Falchion was thrust through his back. "Oh…you son of a motherless goat…" he mumbled, as he faded into darkness.

"I suppose that's it for him," Chrom said, catching his breath.

Bubble Lucina tensed, not feeling very safe. Validar suddenly reappeared behind Chrom and fired a dark sphere of magic at him. "Father!" Bubble Lucina cried, pushing Chrom out of the way. Suddenly, she was flying, having been launched in the air by the attack. She groaned. Every nerve in her body tingled with pain. She struggled to get up, to no avail. She saw the dim shapes of Validar and Chrom fighting. She tried to rise again, but she was too weak. She felt her life force slowly fading. *I'm…I'm so sorry, Robin…I wasn't able…to change our fates…* Her eyes slowly closed, and her heart stopped.

"…BULL#&%!" Lucina cursed.

Language, ma'am.

"Oh, so you're going to censor me?!" the very angry woman asked. "It's bad enough you just killed my bubble counterpart!"

Hey, I weighed in the intense guilt, the physical weariness from lack of sleep, the self-doubt, the fact that Robin provided long-range magic attacks for Chrom in the canon timeline…

"Yeah, but I wouldn't die!"

That's my decision, now isn't it?

"Why do I get the feeling that you just didn't want to write out the final battle with Grima?"

You do know that with a few keystrokes, I can marry you to Viron, right?

"And stop speaking in narration!"

The Writer sighed. "If my internet wasn't out, we wouldn't be having this conversation."

Lucina glared at the Writer. "Really? 'The Writer'? How original. Trying to make yourself seem respectable, I see."

The Writer stared at the computer screen. "Did I really just insult myself?" he murmured.

"YOU'RE NOT EVEN GOING TO MAKE ME A SEMI-REAL CHARACTER?!" Lucina shouted.

"Why are you getting so mad? You're usually so calm."

"Maybe if I didn't have a horrible amateurish writer, I wouldn't be so OOC!"

"Well excuuuuuuse me, Princ—"

"No." Lucina interrupted, glaring at The Writer (somehow).

"Ok. Sorry."

"Just revive Bubble me already."

"Fine…"

The Afterlife is kind of…disappointing, Bubble Lucina thought. She was in a grey room, which was completely empty.

"Y'know, I figured that you would last a little longer," someone said from behind her.

Bubble Lucina whirled around. Robin stood in front of her, smirking.

"NO!" Lucina yelled.

"What is it this time?" The Writer sighed.

"Are you really going with a clichéd 'meeting your spouse in the afterlife/dream' scene?"

"…yes?"

"Gods, Owain could tell a better story than you."

"…There's only one God, and I'm pretty sure He doesn't dress like—"

"You know what? I'm writing this story." Lucina snapped.

"…well, good luc—"

As I watched my other self's life drain from her body, I felt an overwhelming sense of disappointment fill my heart. I had always felt that I could push the guilt and pain to the far corners of my mind to focus on the task at hand, but it seemed

that the loss of Robin would have been too much for me.

I watched Father, eh, Chrom, and Validar continue the fight. Chrom was obviously running out of steam, and while Validar was wounded, he had somehow managed to stop the bleeding.

I heard a soft groan from Bubble Lucina. Robin had always thought me to be the most beautiful woman in the world. I wondered if he would think the same of Bubble Lucina, with her face coated with sweat, blood running down from various cuts on her body, and her clothes torn and dirtied. He probably would have still said the same thing. I felt sorry for my other self. I had been lucky, having been able to both have the world and Robin. Once I was gone from the Outrealm, I knew that he would still be there. But Bubble Lucina had no such promise.

Astonishingly, she began to get up. I focused on her, feeling her emotions and thoughts. She wanted to die, to give up and let the pain go away. But the memory of Robin would not let her surrender to death just yet. She knew that Robin would not stop fighting, even if he was mortally wounded. I felt a small speck of hope.

Validar blasted Chrom with dark magic, sending him flying. I winced. It wasn't pleasant seeing my father being hurt, even if this was simply an alternate reality. Validar began laughing. "Fool! Even with your tactician's sacrifice, you are still unable to win!"

An arrow suddenly buried itself in Validar's back. He roared in anger and spun around to face his attacker. Basilio stood there, bow in his hand. "Hello there," he said, grinning.

I spent the next few minutes watching Basilio explain Robin's plan (why Bubble Lucina didn't just stab Validar in the back, I'll never know). It seems that even though he was dead, his final play was still existent. He always was a bit of a show off.

After Validar was told that the gems in the Fire Emblem were fake, he was furious. He immediately teleported to the other side of the dark wall and shouted some orders to his troops. The wall dissipated. Bubble Lucina, Chrom, Basilio, and Flavia rushed to the Shepherds' aid. Aquick look was all that I needed to tell that the Shepherds' were barely holding on. I couldn't find Stahl or Henry, and most of the other troops were heavily injured. Their formation was a mess without Robin to give support.

Luckily, once the four other fighters arrived, the tide of the battle changed. Chrom rallied the Shepherds, and they advanced towards Validar. Bubble Lucina and Chrom faced Validar, who was visibly anxious at this point. Bubble Lucina seemed to have steadied herself somewhat, and between her and Chrom, Validar was soon on his knees. I watched as Bubble Lucina stared Validar down. "No matter what you do, he will always be dead," Validar coughed. Bubble Lucina said nothing, simply stabbing Validar through the chest. The dark mage died with a gasp.

Aflash of light appeared in front of the Grima's alter. Grima, in Robin's body, cackled as he walked towards the Shepherds. (Insert explanation of evil plan here.) "I see that you have destroyed my planned vessel. But you have accomplished nothing. I can simply redo the ritual with this body!"

I saw Bubble Lucina's face fall. I knew that she was probably feeling horrible. After all, she had just found out that killing her fiancé had little to no effect on her fate. The Shepherds were forced to watch as Grima summoned his dragon form, causing the walls to crumble around them.

"Let's move!" Chrom called, running towards the exit. As I watched the Shepherds stumble out of the Dragon's Table, I saw that several members were missing from their ranks, most of them having been married. I also counted a couple of missing children, and it struck me that many of them had lost a parent.

The Shepherds, slowed by their injuries, barely reached safety in time. They watched as the Dark Dragon flew away. The weight of the deaths in the Shepherd family finally set in, and many of them began to weep. I saw Bubble Lucina fight back her tears, trying to remain strong. She failed. I noticed then that her mother was not among their ranks. Chrom sat down on a rock, tears streaming down his face. "Sumia," he whispered.

"Now what?" Severa asked softly, a much different person from her usual snarky self.

Chrom shook his head. "I…I don't know. I didn't have time to get the Fire Emblem." He gazed over the rumble that was now the Dragon's Table.

"Father would have gotten it," a voice said darkly. The Fire Emblem was suddenly tossed at Chrom's feet. Morgan stood among them, her face a mask of raw determination.

Bubble Lucina began to tremble. "M-morgan," she said softly.

The girl seemed much older, much more somber. It pained me to see her like that. She looked at her mother with cold eyes. "Hello, Lucina."

Morgan's cold greeting made Bubble Lucina Flinch. "How did you get this?" she asked, indicating to the Fire Emblem.

"There were more Grimleal outside of the building," Morgan said, nodding to the sprawled bodies around the rubble. "They kept me from getting inside sooner. Once I did, there was only time enough to grab the Fire Emblem and run."

Chrom finally spoke. "Morgan…we're going to need your assistance if we're going to have a chance of defeating Grima. You're as brilliant as a tactician as your father was, and—"

"My father was a fool!" Morgan shouted. "He should have known that he was worth far more than you! And you…you don't want me…you want a carbon copy of my father." She turned away.

Bubble Lucina tried to place her hand on Morgan's shoulder. "Morgan, please try to understand."

Morgan laughed bitterly. "Oh, I understand completely, *Lucina*. You're missing a third of your troops. And in the end, that's all you saw father as, didn't you? Atroop to be used and discarded as needed. Father ordered us like chess pieces and he still valued us more than that." She sighed. "Very well. I'll fight for you. I'll lead you. But only because father would have done it."

There was silence for a few seconds. Chrom picked up the Fire Emblem. "We have to go to Mount Prism. We have the gems. Once we're there, I'll enact the Awakening Ritual. It's the only way we can defeat Grima."

The Shepherds walked wordlessly. The healers mended them as well as they could, but no magic could heal the emotional scars that the last battle had torn. But there was no time to bury the dead, even if they could find the bodies. In the darkness, one could have mistaken them as a funeral barge.

They eventually arrived at Mount Prism. The fields were lush and green, and it seemed to refresh the Shepherds somewhat. Chrom suddenly froze. "Risen," he hissed. "How could they be here?"

"No place is safe from Grima's power," Morgan said, drawing her sword. She began to give out orders, just as deftly as Robin had. Interestingly, the Shepherds seemed eager to follow orders. It seemed that they needed someone to trust, to depend on. I knew the feeling well.

Within an hour, the battle was over, and no Shepherd lives had been lost. "You did well," Bubble Lucina said quietly, still attempting to connect with her daughter.

Morgan paused. Thinking that she wouldn't say anything, Bubble Lucina turned to follow Chrom. "Do you think he would be proud of me?" Morgan finally said.

The azure-haired woman looked at her daughter. "Yes. I know that I am, at least," she replied.

Morgan simply nodded and followed Chrom to Naga's Alter.

Chrom preformed the Awakening ritual, and was informed that Grima could only be put into slumber unless Grima killed himself. Morgan instantly pointed out that if Robin was alive, he could have sacrificed himself, since he was destined to be the host of Grima. Bubble Lucina's face fell even more, and she seemed to be about to burst into tears.

The group trudged up Mount Origin, preparing to climb onto the back of Grima's dragon form. Whatever strength Bubble Lucina had gained while fighting Validar had been lost by now. She looked miserable, and ready to collapse. But she said nothing while they climbed the hillsides. Finally, Grima's form was within sight. There was no speech, no words of comfort, no battle cry. They simply climbed upon the Dark Dragon's back and prepared for battle.

"HAHAHAHA!" Grima roared with laughter. "You still dare to resist me?!"

Dark blasts of power shot up from Grima's back, instantly wounding all of the Shepherds. "N-no…" Chrom stammered. "This can't end…like this."

Morgan suddenly rushed towards Grima, disregarding her injuries. Staying at a safe distance, she fired a huge lightning bolt at Grima, who barely blocked it. "Fool…You'll regret tha—."

Morgan engulfed the Dark Dragon in flame. The attack was weak because of Morgan's injuries, but it distracted Grima. "Heroes! Now is the time! Receive my power!" a voice called. Beams of light were fired from the sky, healing all of the Shepherds' wounds.

Chrom stood up and ran towards Grima. The rest of the Shepherds fought off the Grimleal while staying close enough to Morgan to hear her tactical orders. Bubble Lucina followed Chrom, cutting down any opponent who stood in her way. Bubble Lucina, Chrom, and Morgan fought against Grima, who was barely holding them at bay. Chrom lunged for an attack, only to get shoved back by Grima. Morgan saw an opening and began rapidly firing magical blasts at Grima. In a desperate attempt to shake off Morgan, Grima fired a huge blast at the young tactician, draining his own life force. Morgan was dashed to the ground, and didn't rise.

I felt a surge of Bubble Lucina's emotions. She was overwhelmed with guilt. She had lost her entire family in her time, had lost her fiancé in this time, as well as her mother, and might have just lost her daughter. She was sick of seeing death. She wanted nothing but for her pain to stop. She remembered the younger Lucina that was left at Ylisse, and would have to grow up without a mother. She couldn't let her grow up in the same world that Bubble Lucina had.

She gripped Falchion and charged Grima. The Dark Dragon was still weak, and attempted to defend himself against Bubble Lucina's attacks. The lord used no technique or strategy. She simply focused all of her rage, frustration, and sadness that she had felt during the past week into her blows. She was so caught up in her emotions that Chrom had to grab her arm for her to realize that Grima lay defeated at her feet.

I barely paid attention to Chrom delivering the final blow to Grima. I only saw a much weaker, much more depressed version of myself, looking like she was twenty years older than she really was. Morgan was still sprawled out on the back of Grima. The other Shepherds, still alive thanks to Grima's relatively quick demise, fled the back of the dark beast before Grima's dragon form turned into bones. Chrom grabbed Bubble Lucina's hand and slung Morgan over his shoulder before running.

The Shepherds watched as the Dark Dragon crashed into the ground and rapidly turned into bones. Chrom began to chuckle, and then burst into joyous laughter. The other Shepherds followed suit, hugging each other and laughing. Even Bubble Lucina smiled, albeit sadly. Once the laughter had died down, Chrom stood in front of the others. "Our first course of action is to remember the fallen," he said. "We have all lost friends and family…"

I ignored the rest of Chrom's speech. I often did, even in my reality. The choice was taken out of my hands anyway, because the scene changed. I'm not sure how many months had passed. Bubble Lucina was dressed in a plain traveler's coat. Asmall group of nobles were in the palace courtyard, gathered around baby Lucina, cooing over her to get Chrom's favor. Bubble Lucina carefully whispered something into her ear and stepped away. She began to exit the palace through the back gate, where another woman in a cloak was waiting with two packs.

"Did you say goodbye to Chrom?" the woman, Morgan, asked.

Bubble Lucina nodded, lifting one of the packs. "He's still against it, but it's not like he can stop us."

Morgan nodded. "Let's start walking, then." They began to walk down the road, no goal, no specific place to go. Reading Bubble Lucina's thoughts, I quickly figured that the two were becoming nomads, attempting to leave the sorrows of their lives behind while still being able to assist others. "Do you think father would have sacrificed himself?" Morgan asked.

Bubble Lucina thought for a bit. "Knowing him, he probably would," she admitted.

Morgan simply nodded. She stopped and turned to her mother. "I forgive you, mo—…I'm sorry. I can't call you that just yet." She looked away sheepishly.

Bubble Lucina smiled, the first in a long while. "It's alright. We'll get there. One step at a time."

I was removed from the Bubble Room. I decided to take Robin's device and not think about what I had witnessed until I got back home. I quickly left the Outrealm and had the wagon driver take me back to the palace. When I stepped out of the coach, Robin was there to ask me about what I had seen. It took me a while to tell him, but

---

No.

I looked up. "Are you kidding me?! I was doing such a good job!" I yelled.

Stop speaking in the first person. I'm taking over.

Lucina gritted her teeth, probably trying to avoid swearing again.

The Writer popped his neck. "I really have nothing to write in the epilogue."

Lucina frowned. "But I was going to write about Robin's reaction to—"

"DO YOU WANT ME TO MAKE THARJA YOUR DAUGHTER?!"

"No…"

"Then go back to being a fictional character."

...a cop out, I know. But I had to put in just a little humor into it. Otherwise I would go insane.

Review if you have the time, and feel free to suggest ideas!

Chapter 6: Chapter 6: Gerome's Freaking Awesome

I really wanted to do this one for a while...Be warned, the basic story of FE: A has been extremely altered in this scenario, and people who aren't keen on their Batman might miss some references. Also, I didn't really proofread this, so it might seem a little rushed.

"AWAY FROM ME!" Gerome shouted at Nah.

The Manakete simply stuck out her tongue at the masked wyvern rider. "C'mon! Even Jerome is doing it!"

Gerome glanced at his younger self, who was giddily playing with Cynthia and Chambray. He sighed. Jerome was much different from his moody, distant counterpart, probably due to his upbringing in a world of peace. He envied Jerome, who never had to lose his parents. "I'm still not going," he said.

Nah pouted. "Meany."

Gerome groaned gravely and walked away. For the past hour, Nah had been trying to get him to play a part in a stage performance that the children were hosting. According to her, it was going to be a beautiful story about their parents' victory over the Dark Dragon, complete with comedy, tragedy, and romance.

Unfortunately, she had let it slip that Severa was going to be directing and Owain was going to be writing the script.

"Gerome!"

Gerome sighed and turned around. "I swear; if you say one more word, I'll feed you to Minerva!"

Robin blinked, taken aback by Gerome's anger. "You're Cherche's son, alright," he replied calmly.

Gerome cringed. He respected the tactician, and felt a surge of embarrassment for yelling at him. "Er, sorry about that, Robin," he said sheepishly.

"Have the other children been annoying you again?"

"Like you won't believe."

Robin nodded. "Well, you'll get to spend some time away from them. Your name was drawn in the weekly outrealm draw."

"At this point, I'll take any excuse to get out of here," Gerome mumbled. He quickly walked over to the royal stables. It had taken Cherche a lot of coaxing to convince him that his Minerva would be well accommodated. The two wyverns each had large rooms, good food, and a collection of wyvern toys that Anna had sold to Cherche (much to Gerome's disgust).

Within few minutes, Gerome was in the air, swiftly approaching the Outrealm Gate. Minerva roared happily, excited to be in the sky. Soon, they were above the Gate. Gerome brought in his wyvern for a landing.

"Hi there, tall, dark, and handsome!" Anna greeted happily. "Want to buy a wyvern toy?"

Gerome simply glared at the merchant and entered the Outrealm, taking Minerva with him. "Stay here, Minervykins," he told the wyvern. He walked over to the tome and placed his hand upon it.

"Freaking bubbles," he mumbled, looking around. He had a few ideas of what scenario he wanted to see. Perhaps he could witness what would happen if his biological parents never died, or what would happen if he overcame his shyness, or….

Or that one.

He saw a bubble that showed him on top of a castle. He had a belt that showed off countless tools and weapons. Ablue wyvern-shaped icon was on his chest. In his hands were two short staffs. But what was even more striking was the man beside Bubble Gerome. Aman dressed completely in black gazed over the horizon. His long cape billowed in the wind that suddenly picked up for no apparent reason. Like Bubble Gerome, he wore a utility belt. Ablack wyvern icon, similar to Bubble Gerome's, was splayed across his chest. Without hesitation, Gerome touched the bubble.

Bubble Gerome watched as seven figures crept towards the palace. They had already taken down the guards at the

gate, and were probably were aiming to assassinate lady Emmeryn. He nodded to the man next to him. They jumped down from their perch, landing on two of the assassins. The caped man quickly took down two more of their opponents, while Bubble Gerome knocked out a third. The final assassin decided that it was best to run. Bubble Gerome simply scoffed and threw a wyvern-shaped boomerang at the man, sending him sprawling.

The man in black grabbed one of the conscious assassins by the collar. "HROSENDFYOUFD?!" he growled, sounding like he was chewing on glass.

The assassin blinked. "Wha-what?" he stammered.

"HORESEIFNTYOURF?!"

"I'm sorry, I don't—"

Bubble Gerome decided to take over before his friend became completely unintelligible. "Who sent you?" he asked lowly.

The man, clearly terrified, looked at him. "If I'll tell you, they'll kill me!" he insisted.

The man in black fired a grappling hook onto one of the corners of the castle and flew into the air, bringing the captured man along with him. He held him over the edge of the wall. "I'll kill you if you don't," he replied.

"Gangrel!" the assassin confessed. "Gangrel sent us!" He took another look at the man who literally held his life in his hands. "Who are you?" he whispered.

The man in black smirked, as if he was used to the question. "I'm Wyvernman," he growled, before dropping the assassin over the wall. Seconds before the man hit the ground, a grappling hook caught his leg, saving the man from sudden death.

Bubble Gerome watched as the man in black glided to him. "Gangrel…he really wants a war," he said grimly.

Wyvernman nodded. "We should probably—"His sentence was cut short by a yell above him.

"HASHTAG WYVERNS 4 LIFE!" Aboy, clad in an embarrassing green and red costume, fell from the top of the castle… and hit the ground hard. Miraculously, he stood back up. He grinned. "So, what did I miss?" he asked, straightening out the 'R' on his chest.

The two men groaned. "Ricken, we told you to stay in the—" Bubble Gerome began.

"Hey hey HEY!" the boy shouted, taking off his mask. "I thought we agreed that you'd call me Robin!"

Bubble Gerome grimaced. Years ago, before he had become Nightwing, the name Robin struck fear into the hearts of Plegians everywhere. After Bubble Gerome had gone solo, Wyvernman had chosen a man who was ironically named Robin to take the mask. His tactical mind was incomparable, until he decided that he didn't want to live in the shadows. The newest Robin was Ricken, who eagerly accepted the role.

Now, Robin was little more than a punch line.

Wyvernman sighed. "Well, *Robin*, why don't you go play with Lissa?"

Ricken shook his head. "No way!" he protested. "I'm one of the Wyvern family now!"

Before either of the men could reply, several soldiers, along with Robin, ran up to the three. "What happened here, Wyvernman?" the tactician/commander asked, remembering to keep his friends' identities secret.

"These assassins tried to break in, Sir Gordon," Nightwing replied. "It seems that the Mad King is trying to force a war between Plegia and Ylisse.

Robin Gordon nodded, his face grim. "Very well…I'll report this to Prince Chrom."

Two days later, Prince Chrom rode with the rest of the Shepherds towards Plegia. After some conferring with Emmeryn, they decided that if Gangrel wanted a war, he was going to get one.

They soon set up camp for the night. Chrom was in his tent when he heard Bubble Gerome approach. "Come in," he said. The masked rider entered the tent.

"I have spotted bandits towards the west," Bubble Gerome said. "There are about twelve of them."

Chrom scoffed. "We've taken down many more than that at one time," he replied. He brought out a large chest from the corner of the tent. He unsheathed Falchion and carefully placed the hilt of the blade into the lock. The chest opened, revealing a dark suit, complete with a utility belt and a cape. "I'll be there in two minutes," Chrom said. "Don't bother alerting the others."

Bubble Gerome nodded, racing back to his own tent to put on his Nightwing suit. Despite the ample protection that the suit afforded, it was designed to be able to be put on quickly. Nightwing waited for Wyvernman on top of a canyon that overlooked the bandit camp. Three sentries sleepily guarded the camp, while the rest of the bandits slept in tents.

"They don't seem to be very well armed."

Bubble Gerome stiffened. He had never gotten used to the way Chrom could sneak up behind people. "It should seem so," he agreed. "I'll take the two sentries on the left side."

Wyvernman nodded. "Do it quietly."

Nightwing jumped down into the canyon, landing silently, as he had been trained. He slowly crept behind one of the sentries. The bandit yawned loudly, giving Nightwing the opportunity he needed. He quickly covered the bandit's nose and mouth, keeping him from both breathing and calling out. Soon, he was unconscious. He carefully laid the body down on the ground before doing the same thing to the other guard.

The last sentry was also unconscious, hanging upside down under a tree. No doubt Wyvernman's work. The dark lord motioned to the tents, signaling Nightwing to attack. The two men rushed the camp, quickly taking out the bandits through a combination of surprise, skill, and confusion. They left the bandits tied up in bunches. The group that found them, whether it be animals, townspeople, or rival bandits, would be a matter of chance.

Frederick handed Bubble Gerome a cup of tea. "Long night, sirs?" he asked, knowing the answer.

Chrom nodded. "We found a group of bandits last night. Nothing we couldn't handle."

"Perhaps you should have taken Ricken, master Chrom," the knight replied. "It took me everything I had to keep him from following you."

Bubble Gerome cringed. He knew all too well the pain of babysitting. "Sorry about that, Frederick." He nodded to the parchments on the table in front of them. "So, what do the scouts say about Gangrel's army?"

Chrom sighed. "I don't understand, frankly. His force in just a bunch of goons and amateur bandits. He can't possibly win this war. What does he have to gain?"

Frederick thought for a second. "Along time ago, I was in Valm. My soldiers and I were bribing the village leaders with Seals. One morning, we woke up, and all of our Seals were gone, but we never met any Anna who had met anyone with a seal. Several months later, I saw a child playing with a Secondary Seal. The thief was giving them away."

Chrom frowned. "Why did he do that?"

"Well, he thought it was good sport," Frederick answered. "You see, some men aren't looking for anything rational, like bullion or dragonstones. Some men just want to watch the world burn."

Bubble Gerome paused. "…did you rehearse that?"

Within days, the Shepherds reached Gangrel's lair. There were numerous bandits and low-class soldiers looking nervously around the courtyard. Robin was in a private meeting with Wyvernman, Nightwing, and Robin (Ricken). "Gangrel is locked up with a small handful of mercenaries in this building," Robin said, pointing to an area on a map. "We won't be able to get in without handling the troops around it."

"Send your men to distract the guards. We'll infiltrate the building," Wyvernman replied.

"Take this route," the tactician said, tracing a path on the map. "There's an old underground tunnel that used to be used for moving cattle."

"This is so cool!" Robin shouted happily. "This is going to be easy!"

The three men looked at each other. There was a reason why they had given Ricken's outfit red colors. He served as an excellent distraction. And if they lost him in battle…they'd just get another one.

The three Wyvern warriors rushed through the cattle route, a good distance away from the main battle. "I'm booooored," Robin moaned.

Nightwing did his best to ignore him.

"Are we there yet?"

Wyvernman began to twitch.

"Why isn't anyone listening to meeeee?"

THWACK

Nightwing had thrown a wyverang towards Robin's head. The item had buried itself in the wall, inches from the boy's head.

Robin decided that it was wise to stop talking at this point.

They soon entered the Mad King's castle. The tunnel ended in a small hole that was just big enough for the three to climb up into the top level of the building. They crouched, making no noise as they scouted their surroundings. Gangrel was on a lower level, as was his comrade in terror, Aversa.

"Aw, come on guys," Gangrel laughed, looking at his men. "Why so serious? Let's have a party!" He began to laugh manically.

Aversa laughed with him. "I have the fireworks, Mr. G!" she said, firing a dark spell at nothing in particular."

Nightwing noticed that Gangrel was wearing some sort of war paint. He had smeared his face with stark-white dye, while his hair was now an emerald green and his lips a ruby red. He was wearing a purple suit, for some reason, and was dancing around like it was his birthday.

"Gods, he *is* mad," Nightwing grimaced.

Aversa had painted herself similarly, except she was wearing a mannequin outfit. She happily skipped from place to place.

The three masked warriors separated, planning to take out the mercenaries one by one. Nightwing perched on a railing, staying in the shadows. He patiently waited until a nervous soldier was directly below him. In a flash, he had grabbed the man by the collar. He quickly tied a line to the man's leg and attached it to the railing before diving back into the shadows several feet away. The man's shouts quickly alerted the other guards, who rushed towards the man.

Another shout rang out, and Nightwing saw an unfortunate bandit dragged over the side of a walkway. Laughter suddenly filled the halls.

"Looks like we have some company!" the Mad King yelled giddily. "Go find them, boys," he ordered. The mercenaries looked at each other. They were clearly afraid to take another step, but Aversa winked at them to remind them what she would do to them if they didn't find the intruders.

"BRING IT ON, WEIRDO!" Robin shouted, jumping down from his hiding place. He landed next to Gangrel, wyverang in hand. He looked up. "Hey guys! Wasn't that awesome?"

"Eh, I'd give it a six," Gangrel replied, before punching the boy in the face, knocking him out instantly.

Nightwing cursed to himself. He needed to get Robin to safety. He quickly tossed a wyverang at Gangrel, who was launched into air. He jumped down on Aversa, knocking the wind out of her. He grabbed Robin and jumped back into the shadows as the mercenaries fired arrows at him.

Wyvernman came out of nowhere, knocking out multiple hostiles. As he fought back the remaining guards, he yelled, "Get Gangrel!"

Nightwing quickly laid Robin down and rushed Gangrel, who was getting back up. He landed two punches before Aversa fired a bolt of magic at him, stunning him. The masked man grunted as he struggled to rise from the ground. He saw Aversa above him, ready to deliver the final blow.

"Shepherds! Hands over your heads!"

Aversa flinched, giving Nightwing enough time to land a punch. Shepherds, led by tactician Robin, swarmed into the room. "Get Gangrel!" Robin yelled, pointing to the fleeing psychopath.

Nightwing raced after the Mad King, who was laughing even as he was running out of breath. Nightwing chased him all the way to the top of the castle. He finally cornered him on the roof. "Game's over, freak," Nightwing growled. Wyvernman ran up to him, the Shepherds having dispatched the remaining mercenaries.

Gangrel giggled. "Oh, we both know that you won't kill me. You'll hand me over to the Shepherds, I'll break out after a week, and the fun starts all over again! And the ironic thing is, it'll keep happening because you won't kill me!"

Nightwing and Wyvernman looked at each other. "What do you mean, we won't kill you?" Wyvernman asked.

Gangrel's grin faltered. "Y-you can't kill me. I'm an insanely popular character…there's so many more story arcs that involve me."

Nightwing suddenly grabbed Gangrel and held him over the side of the building. "Alternate universe, idiot." He let go.

As the Shepherds hauled the dozens of Plegian soldiers into jail wagons, tactician Robin conversed with Nightwing and Wyvernman. "Is Robin going to be alright?" Wyvernman asked.

"Nothing's really hurt. Except his pride," Robin replied. "He seems a bit delusional, though. He says that he dreamt that Gangrel was going to kill him with an iron bar."

Nightwing blinked. "That's kind of…odd…"

"And then eventually came back to life."

"That's…stupid."

Wyvernman nodded towards the corpse of Gangrel. "I'm just glad that we nipped this problem in the bud. Who knows what kind of damage he could have caused."

Robin shifted uncomfortably. "Unfortunately, he's not the only oddball we've been notified of." He took out a picture of a man clad in scarlet-red armor. He stood tall and imposing, and wore a strange mask over his nose and mouth. "This is Banehart," Robin continued. "He's been taking over nations by storm, and soon, he'll threaten Ylisse."

Nightwing nodded. "We'll deal with him."

Wyvernman suddenly paused and touched his back. "You OK?" Robin asked.

"I…I don't know," the caped crusader replied. "Just a weird feeling…"

Gerome paused. On one hand, the things he had just seen were the sort of thing an insane man would say he had seen.

On the other hand…it was awesome. Gerome quickly left the Outrealm and urged Minerva back to the castle. The second the rider touched the ground, he ran to where the other children were rehearsing their act.

"No, no!" Severa shouted. "Are you daft? More emotion!"

"I'm sorry, but it's really hard to take 'I took it upon myself to devour a vicious heap of sugary eateries' seriously," Kjelle protested. "Who made Owain the scriptwriter anyway?"

Gerome cleared his throat, causing the others to notice him.

"Did you change your mind?" Nah asked.

"I'll do your play, on one condition," Gerome said. "I get to be called Nightwing."

So freaking tired...I might not be able to write a story at all next week, sorry. I have a bunch of crap to do at school. But feel free to suggest scenarios in the meantime!

Chapter 7: Chapter 7: Mini-collection 1

This is sort of a different style of "what if". It's a collection (at least of two) of mini-stories that are pretty random. I'll probably do more of these in the future when I don't have anything to really write.

...Or when I'm feeling lazy and just want to play SWTOR all day.

"KYEHEHEHEHE!"

Athunderous giggle echoed throughout the crumbling buildings, as the rumbling ground tossed Robin off-balance. As the tactician struggled to rise to his feet, a massive murder of crows swarmed towards him. He prepared Mjolner, despite knowing that even the most powerful tome that he had wouldn't save him.

For no one who sees The Lord of Darkness lives.

The crows slowly moved to the ground, forming a small tornado of ink-black feathers. The whirlwind quickened, preparing to reveal the form of the most vile, despicable, horrifying being in the world—nay, in history. Robin tensed, his blood going cold. He had heard only rumors about the King of Chaos.

They had said that Grima was his lap dog.

Robin had heard that when he laughed, a Pegasus died.

Someone had claimed that he played poker with Chuck Norris and Wyvernman on Friday nights.

One man told a tale about a terrifying creature with long, slender limbs and no face who resided in the forest and kidnapped children. He was the Master of Ravens' janitor.

The crows finally dispersed in a fierce flurry of feathers, and there he was.

Henry.

"Heya there, Robin! How's it going? See any decapitated Shepherds lately?" the white-haired sorcerer asked. "I've heard they make great bowling balls! Sumia in particular had a pretty round head…just like Charlie Brown. The hair might get in the way, though. But I guess I could burn it off, right?"

Robin felt his knees buckle. Never before had he felt so powerless. He quickly glanced around. Rivers of blood flowed through what were once the streets of Ylisse. Corpses had been carefully placed to form images such as flowers or "smiley faces".

Robin bowed his head. He was the only remaining Shepherd, if not the only remaining human. For months he had hid himself from Henry's power, but his luck had run out. He fired his charged lightning blast, knowing what would happen. The godly powerful attack slammed into Henry, who simply laughed, unharmed.

"Oh! That was a rush! I like how it makes my skin feel all tingly! Do it again!"

Robin gaped. His mind ran through all of the ways Henry could torture him. His heart, previously beating faster than he ever thought it could, suddenly stopped. Robin didn't mind. Aheart attack was much more preferable than whatever excruciating death Henry would put him through. He closed his eyes, thankful for the blessed escape.

Henry tilted his head. "Huh. Dead. Well, I guess I better use that spell to bring everyone back to life! This time, I'm going to disembowel them *before* I tear their limbs from their bodies!"

Robin looked at himself. Or herself. Or whatever it was. "Well…this is surreal," he murmured.

"You're telling me," Robin replied.

"…what's going on?" Lissa asked Chrom.

The Exalt simply shook his head. "I'm not too sure." In front of him were two Robins—one male and the other female. They had met the female Robin (which they had dubbed Robina for the time being) in a grassy field, similar to the one in which they found Robin. The female Robin had charged Chrom, showering him with kisses.

Unfortunately, Sumia was there to witness it.

After some talking, the group finally figured out that Robina was from an alternate universe. In Robina's world, she had married Chrom and had given birth to Lucina and a male Morgan. Like Robin, she had also sacrificed herself to save her world, and had come back to life some time later. Other than that, there seemed to be few differences between her world and Robin's world.

"So," Robina said. "How are Gaius and Panne doing? Has Gaius taught Yarne how to steal yet?"

Robin blinked. "Uh…In our universe, Gaius married Maribelle…and with good reason too."

Robina gasped. "Are you insane?!" she yelled. "How could you let that happen?! Gaius and Panne are *perfect* for one another!"

Robin rolled his eyes. "Oh, come on! Gaius and Maribelle have a dramatic history together!"

"Their chemistry is about as good as mine and Tharja's!"

Robin paused. "…Tharja stalked you too?"

Robina sighed. "Yeah. It took me awhile, but I finally got her together with Henry."

"HENRY?! YOU PUT THOSE TWO PSYCHOPATHS TOGETHER?!"

"IT WAS CUTE!"

As Lissa watched the conversation between the two tacticians, she whispered to Chrom, "What do they mean by 'got them together'?"

Chrom thought for a second. Now that he thought about it, Robin was the one who had gotten him to talk to Sumia…and had directed Cordelia to Gregor for advice…and had tossed Nowi at Donnel's head…

"That son of a motherless goat…," Chrom muttered. "He's been matching up the entire army!"

"At least tell me that you had the sense to marry Sully to Stahl," Robina said, rubbing her temples.

"Ha! It's obvious that Sully and Virion work the best together!" Robin yelled.

"Wow, you're an idiot."

"Hey, you're the one who married Chrom!"

Chrom looked up. "I'm right here, Robin," he muttered.

"I mean look at him!" Robin continued, pointing at the captain. "He's a wreck, talks in his sleep, breaks walls on a weekly basis, smells like Sully's cooking, and thinks 'Friday' is a good song!"

Robina looked at Chrom. "You do?" she peeped.

Chrom scratched his head sheepishly. "I like the sound of autotune," he replied meekly.

Robina groaned. "I'm going to have to punch my husband when I get back to my world."

Just then, Lucina ran into the room, carrying a huge load of books. "Robin!" she yelled, shoving the books into her husband's hands.

As Robin watched Lucina catch her breath, he could only ask, "What's this about?"

Lucina steadied herself, gaining her energy back. "Vaike and Basilio were talking about how much time you spend reading…and then Vaike said, 'Robin would die without his books', so I grabbed some of your books from your room and came here as quickly as I could." She looked at Robin worriedly. "Are you alright?! Do you have some kind of book disease?"

It took a while for Robin to reply. Lissa and Chrom where rolling on the floor busting a gut. "Lucina," Robin said slowly. "They were just joking."

Lucina flushed deeply. "Oh…," she said softly.

Robin smiled and put the books on the ground. "But thank you for your concern anyway," he said, reaching to pull her into a hug.

Lucina felt herself grabbed by someone behind her. "Lucina!" Robina said happily. "How's my daughter doing? I hope you've been taking good care of her, Chrom. And she had better not married Inigo! She deserves Gerome or Laurent or someone like that."

Lucina pulled away from her "mother's" grip. "I'm sorry, but I'm afraid you have me mistaken for someone else," she said, confused.

"Lucina, this is Robina," Robin explained. "She's me from an alternate dimension. She also married Chrom in her world."

Lucina nodded, having accepted the fact that people could go in and out of alternate dimensions at any time. Often she wondered if everything she knew was simply a delusion, and she was in some padded room in a mental facility.

"So, who's the guy?" Robina asked, nodding at Lucina's ring.

"Um…," Lucina began, looking at Robin.

Robina followed the princess' gaze, and her jaw dropped. "You…you have to be kidding me…" She slowly sat down on a crate and covered her face. "My other self…married my daughter…"

"…so I guess this means I'm my own mother-in-law?" Robin asked.

Chapter 8: Chapter 8: Lon'qu's Switch

Yeah, I know I didn't have a chapter last week...sorry...I should have more time in a couple of weeks...to make up for my lack of progress, we have either:

A. An extra-long chapter? (Nope)

B. Two chapters? (Nope)

C. An amazing, yet concise, dramatic, yet humorous, report about the wonders of human life, which contemplates the existence of a deity and reveals all of the secrets of life? (Closer)

D. A lazy-as-heck burst of words formed in an extremely disturbing combination of phrases? (There you go).

Enjoy.

Lon'qu groaned. Tharja was right; the Bubble Realm was obnoxious. The swordsman would have cut all of the bubbles to pieces (figuratively speaking), if not for the fact that he would be instantly transported to another reality.

He shivered. Every trained nerve in his body twitched, his instincts telling him to avoid the floating bubbles at any cost. He gripped his sword. Alone bubble floated a centimeter away from his face. He immediately drew his sword and struck down the translucent object.

"No!" the Ferox yelled, desperately trying to avoid being pulled into whatever dimension he had touched. In a flash, he was standing on the deck of a large warship. He burst into a string of curses, slashing uselessly in the air.

Once he had calmed down, he decided that he should at least see what was going on. He took a walk around the ship, looking for his other self. He saw Robin, Lucina, the Khans, and Chrom discussing tactics in a room.

This must be when we were sailing to Valm…, Lon'qu thought. Ascream followed by a splash confirmed his suspicions. Lon'qu peered over the side of the vessel to look at where Virion had fallen, having been pushed by Cherche, who was shouting something about "common decency" and "idiot flirt" and "I could sue you for sexual harassment".

Smirking, Lon'qu walked below deck. He soon found his other self, playing poker with Vaike, Gregor, and Gaius.

"You have trapped Gregor in corner, no?" the mercenary sighed. "I fold." He put his cards on the table.

Gaius chuckled. "How 'bout you, Vaike? Ready to throw in the towel?"

The muscle builder laughed as a bead of sweat ran down his forehead. "The Teach never backs down from a fight!"

"…"

"…"

"…"

"…yeah, I'll fold."

All eyes turned to Bubble Lon'qu. The swordsman looked at his cards to Gaius. "Hm…," he mumbled."…nice try, thief, but I'm calling your bluff," he said finally.

No, NO! Lon'qu thought, remembering the outcome of that game. *Fold!*

Bubble Lon'qu laid out his cards on the table. Straight flush.

Gaius raised an eyebrow. "Not bad," he said, grinning. He revealed his hand. Royal flush.

Bubble Lon'qu cringed as Gaius took his coins. Gregor whistled. "Ah, the flush royal. Very rare, yes?"

"You got that right, Zippy," the thief said, crunching on some peppermint.

Lon'qu walked around the poker table as Gaius dealt another round. Walking over to Gaius' side of the table, Lon'qu

noticed a small case attached to the bottom of the table, close to Gaius' right side. Looking closely, he noticed that the case contained two aces, a king, three queens, and two jacks.

That #$) #! Lon'qu thought angrily.

Bubble Lon'qu got up, tired from losing his third game in a row. "I'm taking a walk," he mumbled lowly. He exited the cabin, popping his neck. He stoically gazed into the sunset. The amber glow of the sky shone onto the deck, the light splintered in the hazy sky. Bubble Lon'qu smiled thinly. Even he could appreciate the wonder and majesty of the world at —

Oh, gods, I'm short, he thought suddenly.

Lon'qu looked at his bubble self, who had suddenly frozen. Bubble Lon'qu suddenly yelled, "WOW, I'M TALL!"

As Lon'qu was forced to watch Bubble Lon'qu run around grinning, he had to ask himself the obvious question:

What in Naga's name is going on here?!

Approximately two minutes earlier:

"Don't worry, chances are you won't turn into a cube-shaped chicken with scissors for wings," Henry assured.

Robin pursed his lips. "I still don't know about this…"

Henry laughed. "Oh, come on! Don't you want to try to cast a hex?"

"Yeah, sure, but…is this the only way?"

"Yup! You're pretty useless when it comes to sorcery."

Robin sighed. "Fine, let's get this over with."

"Nyahahahaha! Ok!" Henry murmured a few words.

Robin waited. "I…I don't think anything happened."

Henry shrugged. "We should have switched bodies…Let's try again."

"Uh, actually, I should go talk to…anyone else." And with that, Robin quickly left the deck.

"No problem!" Henry called encouragingly. "We're in the middle of the ocean, and I know where you sleep!"

It was when Bubble Lon'qu ran up to Cherche to ask her about playing hide-and-seek that Lon'qu realized that his other self had either gone insane or had been possessed. He reluctantly left Bubble Lon'qu to his horrifying antics to search for other extreme changes in the Shepherds' personalities.

He stopped searching upon finding Nowi dashing along the edge of the ship with a sword. The small ninja-dragon hopped down from her perch and cursed.

Lon'qu flinched. He had never heard a foul word out of the manakete's mouth. Nowi paced around, gripping the sword that was nearly twice her size.

Is she pretending to be me? Lon'qu thought grimly.

Sumia then walked up to Nowi. "Hey, Nowi, can you help us with lifting a bunch of—"

"AWAY FROM ME, WOMAN!" Nowi yelled.

Sumia squealed in fear. "I…I'll go ask Panne, then," she peeped before quickly scurrying away.

Lon'qu grimaced. *Why the heck is she acting like me?* he thought. Remembering Bubble Lon'qu, he quickly ran to where his other self was last. He soon found Bubble Lon'qu using his sword as a potato peeler. *A sword is a weapon, not a peeler of produce!* he thought angrily. *...but then again, that is a good idea…*

Bubble Lon'qu was chattering away with Lissa and Gregor, much to the former's surprise. "And then, I was looking for my

rock, and then I found it, and then I lost it again, and then I found it, and then I dropped in the ocean creating a nuclear disaster for some reason which probably obliterated about fifty other realities, and then I was tall!"

Lissa blinked. "Uh…that's very interesting, Lon'qu," she said, not really knowing what to say.

It took three seconds for Lon'qu to put the pieces together. At this point, two people switching bodies really didn't surprise him. He had ceased to be surprised by anything after he had learned that Lucina was voiced by Laura Bailey.

"He knows too much."

"The gaming world must never overlap with our world."

"Kill him with fire."

"Fools! We must stay quiet and observe!"

"He is right. Microsoft has done their part of the deal, intentionally losing support with the Xbox One to pool money with Sony. Sony will use the money to further fuel the Gaming-to-reality machine. Now quickly, we must study these characters, take anything remotely interesting or colorful about them out, and use them for our next Final Fantasy game."

"All hail the Microsoft-Sony-Nintendo pact!"

Just then, Bubble Lon'qu (in Nowi's body…this might get confusing) barreled into the room. "Unhand my body!" he (she) growled.

Nowi (in Bubble Lon'qu's body) peeped, dropping her sword. "Hey! You look just like me! Cool!" she said happily.

Bubble Lon'qu growled, about to toss Nowi into the ocean. Luckily, Gregor decided to speak up. "Gregor would like for there to be no killing, at least not friendly killing."

"I'm going to go get Chrom," Lissa said, running away to find her older brother.

Soon, the rest of the Shepherds had been informed of the body switch. No one knew how it had happened, but Henry said that it would revert by itself in about a week (no one asked how he knew this).

"So I'm stuck in this…thing for a week?!" Bubble Lon'qu hissed.

"I'm tall!" Nowi exclaimed.

"According to Henry, your battle skills didn't change over too, so we'll be able to function more or less normally in battle," Chrom assured.

"Hey Chrom? What's this weird thing that I have?" Nowi asked. "My body doesn't have it."

"Aaaand with that, it's time for dinner!" Chrom said, pushing Nowi towards the mess hall before she could ask any more questions about the male anatomy.

Bubble Lon'qu paled, remembering Nowi's natural curiosity. He quickly caught up with her/him. "We need to establish a few ground rules," he said. "First: Don't look at my body!"

Nowi looked at him. "Why not?" she asked.

"JUST DON'T!" he yelled.

Nowi stuck out her tongue at…herself. "As long as you don't look at my body."

Bubble Lon'qu froze. "What kind of sick freak do you think I am?!"

"Ashort one now! Haha!"

"…second rule: Keep my body alive! I'm going to need it soon."

Nowi hesitated. "I'm improving your body," she replied. She rolled up her left sleeve to show a crude picture of a dragon on her arm.

"You put ink on my arm?!"

"Yup! Isn't it cool?"

Before Bubble Lon'qu could strangle himself, a shout came from the crow's nest. "Pirates!" Virion called.

Nowi drew her sword. "Let's go!" she yelled cheerfully.

Bubble Lon'qu simply grumbled and took out his dragonstone. Concentrating, he was quickly turned into a yellow-green dragon. It took him a while to get used to being a completely different creature, but he eventually was able to steady himself enough for an attack. Before he could rush the enemy ships, Nowi called to him.

"Let me ride me!" she called, waving her sword in the air.

"No," the dragon replied simply.

"Aw, com'on! I let people ride me all the time! It'll be fun!"

"…fine."

Nowi quickly climbed up Bubble Lon'qu's back. "Ta-dah! Let's go!"

Bubble Lon'qu silently soared towards the pirate vessel, spewing bursts of flame. He flew close enough to the ship to tear down its sails, while Nowi struck down any bandits who were foolish enough to get close to a twelve foot fire breathing monster.

Bubble Lon'qu stole a glance at the other two pirate ships. The Shepherds had sent out their aerial units, making quick work of the unfortunate swashbucklers. Nowi jumped down from her mount, slashing left and right (actually, there was nothing left to attack; she just felt like doing that).

Bubble Lon'qu shifted back to his human form as the other Shepherds began to search the cargo for valuables. "Hey, look!" Nowi chimed, pointing to a couple of women peering from the door to the hull.

"Wait!" one of the women yelled. "Don't hurt us! We were prisoners!"

Nowi looked to Bubble Lon'qu, silently asking for confirmation. He nodded. "Ok!" Nowi replied. "We'd send you back on this boat, but it's kind of…un-sendable." She nodded towards the fallen sails and the now demolished deck.

"Why would we want to go back?" one of the prisoners asked, stepping closer to Nowi. "Unless…you'd like to come with us…it would be an honor to have one such as you keeping us safe…"

"I'm good at keeping things safe!" Nowi replied happily. "I have this rock that I don't take my eyes off of!"

"Well then maybe you'd like to keep us safe on the way back to the harbor," the woman replied. "We're sure that you'd enjoy it."

Seeing that Nowi was actually considering accepting, Bubble Lon'qu shouted, "Hands off, female, that body is mine!"

And then he literally died of embarrassment.

RIP Lon'qu: Died in a girl's body.

As Lon'qu returned from his journey, he contemplated the best way to get amnesia. He considered asking Robin…or Morgan…or Emmeryn. Ashout of greeting interrupted his destructive thoughts.

"So did you have fun?" Nowi asked.

Lon'qu glared at the girl. "I'd never want your body," he hissed, before leaving.

Nowi blinked, confused. "Why is everyone being so weird?" she mumbled to herself. "First Tharja, now this…"

Chapter 9: Chapter 9: Emmeryn's Ordeal

Well...it's been a few months...sorry for not updating, but a lot of things have been going on. Mostly laziness, but also family trips, school starting, getting sick, Fallout New Vegas, DayZ, yeah, yeah.

This is part 1/2. It started as a "what if", then I figured at this rate, I'd turn it into a One-shot, but then I couldn't think of anything for my what-ifs, so...here we go.

I'll be going through my previous chapters and adding author's comments, so check those out.

As the former Exalt walked through her small private garden, she gently touched each of the flowers. She slowly bent down and gazed at a white rose. "This is...ah...what is this again, Chrom?" Emmeryn asked softly.

Chrom, who was standing a few feet behind his sister, replied, "That's the Shiroibara, Emm. Say'ri sent it from Chon'sin. It represents innocence and devotion." He smiled sadly. "It suits you well."

Emmeryn stood up and smiled. "Thank...you...Chrom," she said slowly, struggling to form her words. The two royals walked through the garden, saying nothing and allowing the scenery to sink in.

It's nice here, Emmeryn thought. *I wonder if that girl would like to see it...L...Lu...Lucina, right? How...old is she now?* For a moment, she considered asking Chrom about the age of her niece, but she quickly caught herself. *No...I...have to do this...by myself. ...Nine?...No, twenty-two...oh, that's right...there's two of them now...both of them are such nice girls...*

"Hey, Emm?"

Emmeryn's thoughts were interrupted by Chrom's voice from behind her. "Yes, Chrom?" she asked, stopping to look at her brother.

Chrom looked down reflectively. "Do you think I'm a good Exalt?"

Emmeryn smiled. "Of course...I'm so proud of you," she said encouragingly.

The blue-haired man sighed. "Sometimes I'm not sure whether I'm doing the right thing or not. I'm a warrior; a captain. I don't know how to lead a nation in a time of peace. I act according to my emotions, not my head." He shook his head. "You were so much better at this than I am. Maybe if you could come to the castle-"

"No," Emmeryn said quickly. "I...I'd rather...stay where it's quiet...besides...you have Crow with you."

Chrom hid a smirk. "It's Robin, Emm."

"Ah..."

"And if there's anyone who deserves to live her life is peace, it's you."

Emmeryn hummed softly and picked a Pyramidal Orchid. Handing it to Chrom, she said, "Plant this near the palace. It doesn't need much water, and it's can be planted on most soils."

Chrom beamed. "Emm! You said two sentences without having to pause!" he said, laughing with glee

The blonde smiled brightly. "I did!" she said proudly. The two walked on to Emmeryn's small hut.

After the defeat of Grima, Emmeryn had decided to live by herself about two hours away from Ylisstol. There were many tears and speeches upon her departure, but the royal family frequently visited the semi-amnesiac.

Luckily, though Emmeryn's mind was somewhat damaged by her injuries, she was still able to take care of herself, as well as a small garden and a few livestock. The local market was walking distance away, and the former ruler of Ylisse was warmly welcomed by the small village nearby.

As soon as Emmeryn and Chrom reached the small house, Lissa burst from the door, "Emmy!" she yelled happily. "Sumia made pies!"

Emmeryn stared at her younger sister, taken aback by the sudden change of atmosphere. "Uh, Lissa?" Chrom said quietly. "Slow down."

"Oops. Sorry," the princess said sheepishly. "Hey! Do you want to go to the market, Emm?"

"I'd...love to," Emmeryn replied happily.

"Great! Let's go!" Lissa said, grabbing her sister's hand.

"Oh! Look over there! They're selling candied apples! Hey look! Dresses!" Lissa said, pointing to various stalls.

Emmeryn said nothing as she followed Lissa through the streets of the market. Despite the multitude of voices clamoring for customers, she found it quite easy to focus with her sister around.

It's nice to see her so happy, Emmeryn thought, pleased.

Lissa suddenly gasped. "Emmy! Look!" She quickly ran over to a toy stall and grabbed a small doll made out of flowers, old clothing materials, and straw. "It's just like the one you made me when I was little!" she exclaimed excitedly.

The ex-Exalt smiled, remembering the gift that she had given Lissa years ago...

Emmeryn rushed towards Lissa's bedroom, the cries of the young girl echoing throughout the palace halls. "I'll handle it, thank you," the Exalt said, nodding to the approaching guards. She entered the room and looked around. Lissa was on her bed, hugging her knees to her chest, while tears streamed down her face.

"*What's wrong, Lissa?" Emmeryn asked softly, sitting on the bed and putting a hand on her sister's shoulder.*

"*I...I had a bad dream," the other girl whimpered.*

"*I see...What about?" Emmeryn gently wiped the tears from Lissa's face.*

Lissa sniffled. "Daddy was yelling...and then bad guys came...and then they...they..." She broke into another barrage of tears.

Emmeryn nodded and pulled her younger sister into a tight hug. "It's alright," she said comfortingly. "I'm here now." Once Lissa had calmed down a bit, Emmeryn spoke again. "Stay here, okay? I'll be right back." The older blonde quickly walked back to her room, very large and lavish for a girl of her age, but customary for an Exalt. She looked through her drawers until she found a small, carefully crafted doll. She had made it herself in her spare time, using materials that the poorer townspeople had given her during her visits.

She walked back into Lissa's room and handed her the doll. "Here," she said. "This is for you."

Lissa clapped happily. "Yay!" she yelled. "Thank you!" She excitedly hugged the doll.

Emmeryn smiled. "I'm not going to be able to spend as much as time with as I'd like to anymore," she said softly. "So that doll is going to have to stand in for me when I'm not here, okay?"

The young girl looked at her sister. "You better still come to see us!" she replied.

Emmeryn smiled sadly. "I'd do my best," she said simply.

"I still have the one you gave me," Lissa said proudly. "I...I held it again after you...um..."

"When...I...jumped?"

"...yeah."

There was silence for a few seconds. Emmeryn decided to say something. "Let's go...back...Chrom will be...waiting..."

"Ok!" Lissa exclaimed, grabbing her sister's hand. "Chrom's probably starving without us to make him a meal."

When Emmeryn and Lissa arrived at the hut, they quickly noticed that another horse was tied to the post nearby. "Were you expecting someone, Emm?" Lissa asked, moving to open the door.

"No..."

Lissa opened the door and walked in, Emmeryn close behind. Chrom was sitting on a rather plain chair, reading from an old tome. Hearing the door open, he looked up. "Welcome back," he said. "I'd thought you guys ran away."

"We thought about it, but we ran out of money," Lissa shot back.

Chrom laughed, and Robin poked his head through the doorway leading from the kitchen. "Hey there, Lissa. Your Grace." He bowed slightly in respect to Emmeryn. "I hope you like your eggs scrambled...because I kind of messed them up." He nodded to the plate in his hand.

"Mutilated is a more accurate word," Chrom murmured, grimacing.

Robin chuckled sheepishly, setting the plate down on the table. "Um...Emmeryn? I'm actually here to talk to you."

Emmeryn looked up from staring at the eggs. "...me?"

Robin nodded, remembering to speak slowly. "Yes. Your name was drawn for the Bubble Outrealm...helmet. I'm not completely sure why your name was in there to begin with..."

Lissa poked her sister. "Remember when I told you about the Bubble Outrealm, Emm? ...why haven't I been selected to go there yet, anyway?"

"Because the writer can't think of an interesting story that you'd fit in," Robin and Chrom replied simultaniously.

"Anyway," Robin continued. "If you don't feel like going to the Outrealms, I understand. I just wanted to let you know."

Emmeryn thought for a while. "No," she finally said. "I'd like...to go."

Robin nodded. "Alright, we can leave tomorrow, if you like. Frederick will be escorting you. In the meantime..." He looked at his badly shaped eggs. "I'm going to make some more eggs."

"Let me help," Emmeryn said quickly, much to Chrom and Lissa's relief.

"Um...alright," Robin replied, walking into the kitchen.

Emmeryn deftly cracked a few more eggs, expertly handling the cooking, while Robin simply watched, unable to compete.

"You handle those eggs quite well, Your Grace," Robin said, trying to start a conversation.

"I've had...to learn to...cook for myself," the ex-Exalt replied simply. "...Why don't you call me Emmeryn?" she asked after a short pause.

Robin grinned. "You said a full sentence!" he said happily.

"Don't ignore my question, Robin."

Robin paused. "I never really thought about it," he admitted.

Emmeryn sighed. "You should call me Emmeryn...or Emm. Like Chrom and Lissa do."

"..."

"...Robin...you don't still feel guilty, do you?"

"...we should flip this eggs."

Emmeryn suddenly swatted at Robin with her giant wooden fork. "Answer my question, or I'll use the frying pan next."

"You've been spending way to much time with Lissa," Robin mumbled. "Yeah, I guess I still do feel guilty." He paced around. "It was my first big loss...I had allowed you to get captured...and when the time came to decide what to do...I told Chrom to let you die. Did you know that?"

Emmeryn chewed on her lip. "No," she admitted softly. "But I don't blame you. After all; it all turned out for the best."

Robin just shrugged.

"...you're a tactician, Robin. Think. What would have happened if dozens of Plegians didn't see me sacrafice my life for my people? Can you seriously say, with all certainty, that we could have won the war?"

Robin paused. "I don't know," he murmured.

"Exactly. So shut up."

Robin gave Emmeryn a look. "You *really* need to stop spending so much time with Lissa."

Emmeryn put the perfectly cooked eggs on a plate and started to walk out of the kitchen.

"...thank you...Emma."

"...no, Emma doesn't quite work."

"Yeah, I'll just go with Emmeryn."

"That would be for the best."

Chapter 10: Chapter 9-2: Emmeryn's Ordeal (2)

Ok, kinda screwed up. I forgot that after her return, Emmeryn moved to *Ferox*, not a village in Ylisse. So...yeah...awkward.

And yeah, I could use some ideas for more chapters, or even another fic! It doesn't even have to be Fire Emblem. That being said, I probably don't know nearly as many games or anime as the average fanboy/girl. Shoot me a PM if you got something!

"...seven silk blankets, fifteen bottles of pure water, and two copies of *The Complete Works of Artur von Renais*."

"...you really don't need to go to all of this trouble, Frederick. You two will only be gone for a day, at the most."

"Mistress Emmeryn's safety and comfort are of utmost importance, milord. Ah, I almost forgot the bath salts."

Chrom sighed as the knight quickly darted into a separate room. At this rate, Emmeryn's wagon wouldn't be ready for hours.

Frederick walked back into the room and placed two vials of bath salts into an already bulging bag. "Next, four sets of Her Grace's smallclothes," he said to himself, walking to collect the required items.

"Ah, Frederick!" Chrom called quickly.

"Yes, milord?"

"Uh, I'll get those for you."

"Are you sure, your highness? I have gladly fetched your royal undergarments for many years-"

"I'm sure, Frederick. Thank you."

"Very well, milord." The armored man left to count the number of socks...again.

Chrom paused, realizing that he had just agreed to get his sister's underwear. Luckily, he saw just the man for the job walking by the room.

"Robin!" the Exalt called cheerfully.

"Uh, hey there, Chrom," Robin replied, surprised.

"How would *you* like to do a favor for me?" Chrom asked, clasping his friend by the shoulder.

"...last time you asked me that, I ended up with Minerva holding me upside down by my ankles while Basilio dowsed me in Nowi's saliva."

"Ah, good times. No, I need you for an even *more* special mission than that," Chrom replied. "I need you to-"

"Hi there, dear!" Lucina said, rushing into the room. "How's it going? Listen, there's uh...an...uh...emergency...uh...at the stables...uh...because Minerva's pregnant!"

"Wait, what?" Chrom said.

"That's horrible!" Robin exclaimed. "I have to, uh, help deliver the baby!" Robin and Lucina quickly rushed out of the room, leaving a very confused Chrom.

"Thank you," Robin whispered to Lucina as they walked down the hallway.

Half an hour later, Chrom had finally tracked down Lissa to ask her to collect Emmeryn's smallclothes. After a few minutes of mocking and giggling, she got the clothes for him.

Chrom shook his head in shame as he stuffed the smallclothes in the bag. Seeing Robin and Lucina, he called out, "Hey! Is the delivery finished already? I never knew wyverns gave birth that quickly...Wait, don't wyverns lay eggs?"

Robin and Lucina looked at each other. "Uh, actually, Father," Lucina replied carefully. "It turns out that wyverns...uh..."

"-*spit* out their young...once they've created a ball of *dung*," Robin finished. Lucina glared at him sharply. Robin simply shrugged.

Chrom narrowed his eyes. "Are you lying to me, you two?"

"No!" Lucina said quickly.

"She is," Robin said, just as quickly. Lucina's mouth gaped open.

"R-robin!" she shrieked.

"She's developed a habit of lying ever since she decided to cosplay as Marth. Nowadays you can't trust a word that comes out of her mouth...especially if she says something that includes 'Robin' and 'poured cold water all over my newly bought dress yesterday around three in the afternoon.'"

"Robin! What about the time you told little Eudes that he had been blessed by Naga and thus was destined to vanquish the darkness?

"Hey, if I didn't do it, someone else would have. Owain didn't get to be himself without some outside help."

"Alright, you two," Chrom said finally, rubbing his temples. "Just...do whatever you were doing before." The couple left, still bickering.

"Everything is prepared, Lord Chrom!" Frederick announced, coming into the room.

"Finally. Well..."

"I'll take good care of her, milord."

"I know you will."

"..."

Emmeryn said nothing as they slowly rode across Ylisse. Frederick, who was driving the horses, would offer her a drink or a snack every half hour or so, and she would politely accept. After some hours of quiet traveling, Frederick announced their arrival at the Outrealm Gate.

"Greetings, Anna," Frederick said, nodding to the redhead.

"Do you have any more posters to sell?" she asked, looking up from her magazine.

"Er...no, miss."

"Oh. Never mind then." She sat down on the ground and resumed reading.

Frederick and Emmeryn entered the Bubble Outrealm, and the former Exalt approached the book.

"I shall protect your body while your mind is away, Your Grace," Frederick said.

Emmeryn smiled. "Thank you, Frederick...you've always...protected me."

Frederick paused awkwardly.

"Frederick, if you mention anything about my being captured during the war, I will have you training the children for a month." Emmeryn said suddenly, as if reading his mind.

"But I-"

"What is your duty?"

"To defend Ylisse and its royal family."

"Correct. In that order."

"What is a country without its leader? By failing to protect you, I failed to ensure the safety of Ylisse."

"But I was—am— not Ylisse. A leader must be an example for her people. A knight must be prepared to die for his Exalt. But a knight must also be prepared to do whatever is necessary for the well-being of the nation. When I was Exalt, I was unable to sleep for many nights, for fear of nightmares. I feared that I would become my father, rushing into war with no one to hold him back." Emmeryn smiled sadly. "That's why I told Phila, Naga rest her soul, that if I ever did anything to endanger the lives of innocents...that I should be stopped."

Frederick stiffened. "I cannot see that ever being necessary."

"Don't act so surprised. Do you really think that Chrom was the only one with an invisible knife to his throat?"

"...the thought crossed my mind once or twice."

"...does he know?"

"He never gave me any reason to attempt to take his life."

"I figured as much. He makes a good Exalt."

There was silence between the two for a few seconds. "I will be back in...a few seconds, was it?" Emmeryn said finally.

"Yes, Your Grace. Have a pleasant journey."

"Thank you, Frederick."

Opening her eyes, the woman slowly took in her environment. It was just like how Robin had described it. A glowing room, like warm embers in a fire, and many bubbles drifting around.

Emmeryn smiled to herself as she watched the bubbles float from place to place. *How pretty*, she thought. She carefully walked around, looking at bubbles. Interestingly, there were quite a bit of them. *I've made so many big decisions in my life*, she thought. *But for some reason, I only feel like focusing on two. Weird.*

What if...Emmeryn didn't jump?

"Now, now, my boy—no one needs die today." said the Mad King. "Not you. Not the exalt. Not your friends. Just lay down your sword, and give me the Fire Emblem."

Chrom grit his teeth. Gangrel had him. No matter which choice he made...he would lose. Up on the cliff, Emmeryn stood tall, a step away from her doom.

"Chrom! You can't trust him!" Robin yelled from beside him.

"Of *course* I can't trust him!" Chrom yelled back, frustrated. "But...if I don't give him the Emblem, he'll kill her! How can I choose between my sister or my duty? Yet...I must choose!"

Robin paused. "Chrom," he began. "I know this is hard to accept, but there is only one choice. The needs of the many outweigh the needs-"

"DON'T!" Chrom snapped. "Just...don't say it. Seriously. This fanfic is nerdy enough already."

"Hahaha! You'd let your own flesh and blood, your ruler, die, just for the sake of some old heirloom?!" Gangrel mocked gleefully. "Oh, so delicious! I wonder how your people will react to this! 'The Exalt is dead! Long live her murderer!' Your halidom will collapse before it even started."

"Stop!" Emmeryn suddenly yelled. "King Gangrel, is there truly no hope of reasoning with you?"

"And listen to you babble even longer? Ha! I think not! I'd much rather hear the sound of arrows entering your stomach and the SPLAT as you hit the ground! Take a good, long look from your perch. You're so used to looking down on people, after all. So prepare to meet the ground, and your maker. Unless someone would like to give me the Emblem...NOW!"

"Fine!" Chrom shouted. "Emmeryn...I'm sorry, but this is my decision."

"Chrom, don't," Robin warned.

"Shut up! Emmeryn, MAYBE someday we'll face a crisis where MAYBE the Emblem would have helped...But I know for a fact that Ylisse needs you today! The people need their exalt...and we need our sister. If those dark days should come, we'll face them together."

Emmeryn smiled sadly. "Chrom...thank you. I know now what I must do."

Chrom felt his heart drop. "Emm...what are you-"

"Plegians! Listen to me! War begets nothing but sorrow and misery! Stop this cycle of pain and vengeance! Do what you must...as will I. See now that one selfless act has the power to-"

"Ahem," coughed Tharja. "Look, I know you want your Oscar and everything, but this is really kind of unrealistic."

Everyone turned to the Plegian. "What do you mean?" Chrom asked, narrowing his eyes.

"Well, look at the distance between the archers and the Exalt. Have you *seen* archers lately? They're not exactly known for their inspiring range. I'm sure they'd be a lot more useful if they were, but with how many mages you can get nowadays, they're pretty much useless. Add in the fact that they're shooting upwards...I'm actually surprised you didn't see this, Robin."

Chrom glared at Robin.

"Oh, I also know about, oh, three hexes that could stop those arrows. We could also fly Libra close to her, but around the cliff so we don't get shot, and then use a Rescue stave...You'd really think Gangrel would use Bow Knights."

"I don't really think that's very realistic," Libra said slowly. "Archers are known to be able to shoot at very long distances."

"Screw it, I'm still mad at the game developers for not making more support conversations with Spotpass characters," Robin shot back.

"But...my Oscar!" Emmeryn cried.

"Libra,Cordelia,getheroutofthere," Chrom said quickly. In a flash of feathers, the pegasus rider grabbed Libra and rushed behind the cliff on which Emmeryn was standing, a bewildered look on her face.

"Archers! Fire!" Gangrel ordered. Adozen arrows were let loose...and landed about fifteen meters away from their target. Libra raised his Rescue stave, and Emmeryn appeared safely next to Chrom in a flash of light.

"Tharja, how'd you like a job as a tactician?" Chrom asked. "The position recently became vacant."

"I hope this all turns out for the best," Emmeryn said, brushing herself off.

"Of course it will!" Chrom laughed. "You're alive! That's the best possible scenario! Now we must hurry, Gangrel will give chase, and we have to get you to safety."

"OH, GODS, WE'RE GUNNADIE!" Chrom yelled, as Stahl died right next to him, having been struck by an arrow (which for some reason was able to hit its target, this time).

"Eh, I don't know," Robin replied. "I never really liked Stahl."

"Allllll!" **THWACK**

"**...**or Maribelle."

**Kaito would like to take a moment to apologize for the blunt bashing of characters in this fic. It's not that he* hates *any of the characters, but he finds some of them...boring. He realizes that this was totally uncalled for...*

...unless he had a reason for it, which he does. Don't worry; there's more than just Stahl and Maribelle to hate. Enjoy!

Stahl—Boring, little to no personality, other than...he likes food?

Vaike—Funny for about two seconds, then you realize that Virion is much more classy.

Sumia—Tripping gimmick gets old really quickly. Ditzy personality isn't used well.

*Maribelle—Stuck up little **[-]***

Ricken—Looks like he's twelve. And can get married.

Priam—Nearly pointless.

*This has concluded our announcement**

"Chrom! The cavalry's here!" Robin called. "Frederick! Knock 'em good, ol' Fred—ooh...oh..."

Chrom looked around. They were completely surrounded. All he could see were Plegians, their eyes full of loathing.

"Well at least Emmeryn's safe, right?" Robin said sarcastically.

"Uh...about that..."

"Why couldn't you just let her get her Oscar?!"

What if...Emmeryn didn't learn about her identity after her return?

(Note that in the canon game, she probably didn't, but I kinda tweaked that part so I could get her to talk with Chrom, Lissa, Robin, and Frederick in "present time")

"Chrom! Behind you!" yelled out Sumia. Chrom quickly spun around and sliced through the neck of a Grimleal attempting to stab him from behind.

"Thanks. Is Emm-" Chrom began.

"She's fine, Chrom," Robin said reassuringly, blasting an archer with Elfire. "We're guarding her carefully. He nodded to a group of Shepherds, crowded protectively around a blonde woman.

"Alright. Let's finish this quickly," Chrom replied, nodding. Within minutes, the last Grima worshiper had fallen.

As Emmeryn watched the man walk towards her, a throbbing pain found itself into her head. It wasn't the first headache she'd had, but it seemed much harsher than before. And who was that young woman with him? So many people...and yet she couldn't remember. "Mmm...Th-thank...," she began, but it was difficult to form a full sentence. It had been difficult for a...long while.

Chrom sighed and pulled Robin aside. "...I'm torn, Robin," he admitted, looking at his sister. "If she somehow regains her memory, it may mean greater pain for her."

Robin nodded. He longed to see Emmeryn back as well, but Chrom was her brother. "It may, yes," he said simply.

Chrom bowed his head. "...so be it. I...I want her to remember us; Lissa and me. I...I just want to talk to her again. But that would be selfish of me, wouldn't it? I would be giving her back to a world that nearly killed her once already. She'd remember all of the taunts, all of the guilt, all of the pressure she lived under..."

"It's a difficult situation, Chrom. I don't know what to say."

"...She's alive, and free...and that'll have to be enough for me," Chrom said finally. "She deserves this rest...more than anyone."

"Chrom?" Lissa whispered, coming up. "Emm wants to talk to you. What...what do we do?"

Chrom brushed himself off as he walked up to the former Exalt. As he looked at her, his breath caught in his throat. She looked thinner than he remembered, but no less graceful or serene. "Madam," he said, bowing so he didn't have to look her in the face. "I am glad that you are alright, miss..."

Emmeryn looked at the man quizzically. "Chr...Ch...C...," she stammered, trying to get a word out. Chrom watched, feeling his chest tighten even more.

"Lord Chrom, If I may," Frederick intervened, seeing Chrom's decision."I think we should send this woman to...Ferox. She may need someone to assist her, as she seems to have trouble with communicating."

"That sounds like a good idea," Chrom said softly. "Do you like this idea, miss?"

Emmeryn blinked a few times. "...okay," she agreed. She felt the man's identity slip through her memory, like drops of rain in a hand.

As the group walked back to the village, Chrom waved over Lissa and Robin. "Gods...all the way to Ferox...I'm really losing her again, aren't I?" Chrom murmured.

"At least you know she's alive now," Robin replied. "She can live out the rest of her life in peace."

"We probably can't spend too much time with her, can we?" Lissa sighed.

"Unfortunately, that's probably for the best," Robin replied. "I'm not sure how much it'll take for her to regain her memories, but it's best not to push it."

Chrom nodded sadly. "...I understand. This only means I have yet another person to fight for."

"That's right," Robin agreed. "There's little point in worrying about this if we're all going to die a slow, painful death by Grima's hands."

"..."

"..."

"Heyeyey, guys! You look like you need a good laugh! How about this one: 'Hey, Emmeryn, did it hurt when you fell from heaven?'"

"Where the heck did you even come from, Henry?!"

"And then I'll follow with a 'Believe it or not, Your Highness, I'm falling for you!"

"Stop it, you line-eyed freak."

"And finally, 'Emmeryn, were you pretending to be Ezio again?"

Kaito9049 would like to apologize if the jokes above caused you great pain. Side effects of Fire Emblem: What If *include sneezing, coughing, and death. If you feel like your insides are about to explode, please mail a letter to Leavenworth Federal Penitentiary. In your letter, include either a card key to cell block 12 or a portal gun. A representative will be with you 4-6 weeks after the letter is received. We now return to your carelessly put together fanfic.*

"Natasha...my name...is Natasha," she said, for about the third time, as if she was checking the fact in her mind.

Chrom nodded. "That's a good name," he replied patiently, remembering to speak a bit slowly. "So you really like it here?"

Emmeryn smiled. "I love it here. It's...peaceful. How about you? How are you doing in...your 'distant nation'?"

Chrom chuckled. Robin would have never allowed him to visit Emmeryn.

Unfortunately, Robin was now dead.

"I'm doing quite well," Chrom replied. "I just decided to stop by...for one last time."

Emmeryn tilted her head. "Last time? Won't you...come back sometime?"

"I'm sorry...I really am," Chrom said, smiling sadly. "But I have much work to do, and I can't have you mixed in with it."

"Oh...is your work...dangerous?"

"...In many ways, yes, but substantially less than it was a while ago."

"...please be careful, OK?"

Chrom sat with his sister for a few more hours. They didn't talk about much, mostly the weather or a book that she had read, but Chrom was determined to savor every moment with his sister before he left. The sky was painted orange by the time he walked out of her house.

"Thank you...for visiting...," Emmeryn said, walking Chrom to his horse.

"Thank you for having me. I—oops." Chrom brushed against a low-hanging tree, its branches scraping the cloak lightly draped around his shoulders. Before Chrom could react, Emmeryn bent down to pick up his fallen jacket.

"Here...you dropped..." She froze, seeing the Brand of the Exalt on Chrom's arm. She clutched her head. "Ch...Chr..."

Oh, no. No no no... Chrom quickly leaped onto his horse and grabbed the reigns. "Live a good life," he said, looking one last time at Emmeryn. "Never remember." And with that, he rode away.

Emmeryn stared at the man who was rapidly disappearing into the sunset. "...Chrom," she said finally.

The two never met again.

Emmeryn wiped her moistening eyes. "Chrom," she murmured. She had never doubted that her choice to sacrifice her life for her family and her nation was the right one. Besides, she had survived, somehow.

Kind of like how Robin did.

One might even call it "cheap". Or "jumping the shark".

She chewed on her lip as she thought about Chrom. He had told her everything, and she was very happy to remember her past. But she could not deny that guilt sometimes did eat away at her. If Chrom knew this...no, she could not tell him. He would hate himself for it.

Frederick was there when she left the Room. "Welcome back, Your Grace," he said, nodding.

Emmeryn forced her previous thoughts to the back of her mind, a practiced reflex. "I am ready to leave," she said. Frederick nodded, and motioned for her to follow him out of the Outrealm. Soon they were on their way back to Ylisstol.

They arrived late in the afternoon. After escorting Emmeryn to the castle, Frederick left to unpack the various items he had brought. Emmeryn walked through the halls for a while. She had done this many times before, when she was Exalt, and she had a feeling Chrom did the same.

"Ah, you're back," Chrom said, walking up to her. "Did you see anything interesting?"

Emmeryn took a moment to think. "A few things," she replied.

Chrom shifted uncomfortably. "I'm not sure how to say this, exactly, but I'll try: Did you see a timeline where you never remembered? Your past, I mean."

The blonde woman looked down, then up. Anywhere but at Chrom's eyes. She couldn't, not with what she was about to say. "Yes," she replied.

"Where you...happier?"

"...No," she lied. "I was not...whole," she added quickly. That part was true. The guilt might have been gone, had Chrom not revealed to her her identity, but she knew that something would always nag at her, something besides guilt or anxiety. What was it that Robin liked to say? Something about the bonds that were forged? She'd have to ask him about it later.

Chrom nodded, signs of relief appearing on his face. "Alright. ...Get some rest. You've had a long day."

"OK...I have to go back south tomorrow, anyway."

"Won't you stay with us a few more days? We rarely get to see you."

"I fear...I've stayed here long enough. I've walked a long time through these halls...They bring back a lot...of memories. Few of them pleasant."

"...I understand. Goodnight, Emm."

"Goodnight, little brother."

Chapter 11: Chapter 10: Mini-collection 2

Hehey, guys, welcome to the 2nd Fire Emblem "What-if" mini-collection. Just in case you were wondering, these are the scenarios featuring the people I can't seem to write a full-length fic about, and an excuse to just go completely insane.

It's really short this time, just over the 1000 word minimum I put on myself. This is because I want to try a few new things, both with FE and another fandoms. For example, I got one idea for a FE:A fic from a Youtube comment, of all things.

By the way, sorry if you sent me a message recently and I didn't reply. For some reason, all of my FF alerts have been going to my spam box for the last couple of weeks.

Review if you have the time or inclination, and I hope you enjoy. Feel free to send in requests.

What if...Cordelia went out with Chrom?

"Please, Cordelia, stop fidgeting," Sumia said, even as the other woman paced around the room.

"But he's *on his way*!" Cordelia replied worriedly. "How am I going to greet him? Where is he going to take me? Do I have *How To Make Him Fall For You in a Fortnight* ready at a moment's notice?"

"Breathe, Cordelia."

The redhead sucked in a large amount of air, and let it out in the biggest sigh that Sumia had ever heard. "I just don't want to mess up my chance," she whimpered.

"And you won't," Sumia reassured her. "He'd be crazy to think that you're anything less than wonderful."

Cordelia smiled shyly. "Thank you, Sumia," she said. "I...I know this is probably difficult for you, since you and Chrom kind of...well..."

"Oh, don't worry about that. I realized that if he couldn't see that I had feelings for him now, he never would. No, I'm waiting for a very specific kind of guy."

"What do you mean?"

"Well...I always found white hair to be attractive, and he has to have a great laugh, and smile all of the time, and be able to tell where I am with his eyes closed..."

"*Whoa! My body's pulsing! Wonder if it'll explode! Nyahahaha!"*

Sumia suddenly looked up. "Did you hear that?" she asked.

"Hear what?" Cordelia replied, confused.

"Never mind. Oh! He's here!"

Cordelia nervously gripped the hem of her yellow dress as Sumia opened the tent flap There stood Chrom, a broad smile on his face. "Hey there, ladies," he said happily.

"Hello, Chrom," Sumia replied politely.

"Huh...heh...hee..." Cordelia stammered, not able to greet the man in return.

Chrom laughed. "No need to be so nervous, Cordelia," he said, taking her arm. "I'm the one who has to worry about messing up."

The woman sighed happily. She couldn't help it, really she couldn't. "Where-where are we going?" she asked.

Chrom chuckled and guided Cordelia out of the tent. Pointing at a village a ten-minute walk from camp, he said, "The townspeople are holding a festival there. I figured it be as good a place as any for our first..." He paused awkwardly.

"It's a date, you idiot," Sumia called from inside the tent.

"Ah, uh, thanks," Chrom replied sheepishly.

Cordelia excitedly gripped Chrom's arm. She couldn't believe it. She had a chance with the most wonderful man he had ever met. Somehow, she knew the next few hours would be the best hours of her life, full of romance, fluffy humor, and heartfelt love. It would truly be a tale that would be told for generations to$(%*&(&$

DATA CORRUPTED.

RESTORING...

FAILED.

ASSESSING DAMAGE...

SIX HOURS LOST.

DELETING CORRUPTED DATA...

COMPLETE

RESUMING

COMPLETE

"$%#*()$)$and that's how I almost got married to Lucina," Chrom sighed, embarrassed at how much he had just told. "But you have to promise not to tell anyone!"

Cordelia smiled. They had been at the festival for about six hours, and the sun was hanging low in the sky. She had such a great time, and everything she had predicted would happen came true. She would never forget this day. "I promise," she said assuredly.

Chrom beamed. "I knew I could trust you. You...you're wonderful. You're like Sumia, except...far better in every way."

"Oh, Chrom," the redheaded woman said, blushing.

"It's true. I don't know how I didn't notice you before."

"That's what we're all thinking."

Chrom and Cordelia looked at the rooftop above them, where Gaius was sitting. "Seriously," he continued. "You're sort of an idiot, Blue."

Ignoring the irruption, Chrom smiled at the woman in front of him. He slowly got down on one knee and took a small box out of his pocket. "Cordelia," he began, opening the ring-box. "Will you marry me?"

Silence.

"Um, isn't this sort of sudden?" Cordelia squeaked.

"Everyone I know who's married got married *before* they even went on a date," Chrom replied simply.

"Oh. In that case...yes!" The couple leapt into each others arms, crying happily. "I love you so much, Chrom," Cordelia whispered.

"And I you, my queen," Chrom whispered back.

"Hey guys," Robin said, walking past the two. "I was thinking...it would be awesome if I had a kid with your guys' kid. I haven't decided which one, yet. How many are you planning to have? Eh, we'll talk about it later. Maybe over lunch tomorrow? Ciao!" And with that, he quickly walked away.

The newly engaged couple said nothing for a second. "He's kidding, right?" Cordelia whispered.

"I...I don't know."

What if...The Fire Emblem: Awakening characters did a stage production of *Les Miserables*?

SCRIPT

LES MISERABLES TRAILER

Narrator (Gerome): Aconvict, out on parole...

(Chrom trudges down the streets of Ylisstol, looking over his shoulder)

pursued by the law...

(Walhart and his men ride their horses through the pouring rain)

must care for a young girl.

Chrom: Don't worry, Cynthia, I'll take care of you now.

Narrator: But as she grows older, revolution begins to brew.

Robin: We can no longer be ignored by the Grimleal who oppress the poor!

Narrator: And love is thrown into the mix.

Inigo (singing): Aheart full of love**...**

Morgan (singing): He was never mine to lose**...**

Cynthia and Inigo (singing): Aheart full of you.

Narrator: Starring: Chrom as Jean Valjean...

Chrom (singing): I'll escape now from that outrealm, from the realm of Chrom leKrom!

Narrator: Walhart as Javert...

Walhart: You will not escape me, 98765!

Chrom: That's not my—

Walhart: KNEEL TO YOUR NEW MASTER!

Narrator: Sumia as Fontine...

Sumia (singing): I dreamed a dream of pegasi...of fluffy feathers, and flapping, white wings...

Narrator: Little Cynthia as little Cosette...

Little Cynthia: Where's my mommy?

Chrom: ...I'm afraid you can't see her anymore.

Narrator: Grown Cynthia as adult Cosette

Chrom: And me! Have you nothing for me?

Cynthia: But you're my father. I mean, I've always thought of you as my father. But...it's different with Inigo. It's the way every girl feels for the man who's going to marry her. You always knew I should have to leave you one day, didn't you?

Chrom: No one forgets that, my little pega-pony-princess.

Narrator: Inigo as Marius

Inigo (singing): Red, I feel my soul on fire! Black, my world if she's not there!

Narrator: Gangrel and Aversa as the Thenardiers

Gangrel: Ah, good sir, Cynthia, she is like one of our own.

Aversa: And she has often been so ill, and medicine is quite expensive. Not that we minded paying a cent of it.

Narrator: And Morgan as Epoinine.

Morgan (dying): Don't worry, Inigo...a small bit of rain can...hardly hurt me now...you're here...that's all I need to know...

Narrator: Directed by the man who brought you *The Grimafather* and *The Manakete: An Unexpected Journey...*

(Screen flashes the name "Owain the magnificent bard of destiny")

Narrator: Comes a journey that is sure to make you wet your pants in excitement.

"So?" Owain said, watching his actors look over the script.

"I love it!" Inigo blurted out.

"I have about three minor scenes in the entire movie!" Robin complained.

"I'm not in this at all!" both Lucinas whined at the exact same time, surprisingly.

"I rather like it," Aversa mused.

"The ending for my character disgusts me," Walhart boomed.

"'Music department', eh?" Brady murmured. "I can handle that, sure enough."

"Ha! Lead character! In your face, Robin!" Chrom cheered in a manner quite un-lordly.

"You want me to play as Gavroche?" Nah hissed. "Do you think I look like a boy?!"

"I love it, honey!" Lissa exclaimed, silencing everyone. Owain blushed.

"Thanks, ma," he said sheepishly. "Sorry I couldn't find a part for you."

"Oh, that's fine!" the woman said happily. "I don't mind."

There was silence for a few moments before Morgan spoke up softly. "Do you hate us, Owain?" she whimpered.

Chapter 12: Chapter 11: The Manaketeborn

"FUS RO DAH!" Nah shouted. The young girl paused for a few seconds, staring blankly at the training dummy. Incredibly, the straw-filled fiend remained unmoved, barely flinching at the Manakete's outburst. Nah huffed slightly and blushed. A quick look around the training grounds assured her that no one had noticed her embarrassing cry. Relaxing slightly, she began to slowly walk back to the palace. It was a long shot to begin with, and the usually reserved Nah didn't want to give Severa any more reason to tease her. Thus, the black-haired child had sneaked out of the castle early in the morning as to avoid the slew of soldiers that drilled and exercised on the courtyard daily. Surely no one would be awake at the present hour.

"Psst! Nah!"

Of course there was. The Shepherds were freaks of nature. Spinning around, Nah faced a nearby bush, where she found Robin crouching down in the dirt. "R-Robin! Were you spying on me?" she demanded, her blush escalating from a slight rosiness to a radiant flush.

The man in front of her smiled sheepishly and peeked out of the shrubbery. "Er, no. Not intentionally, at least," he whispered, scanning his surroundings. "I'm actually hiding from Frederick," he admitted. "I somehow allowed him to talk me into joining him for a 'refresher course', and...well, he's not the easiest to keep up with."

It took several seconds of silence for Nah to realize that Robin wasn't kidding. "Oh...kay. Well, good luck with that," she murmured before slowly moving away from the tactician in the foliage.

"Hey, wait!" Robin called, leaping out of his hiding spot to catch up with Nah. "What was the whole 'fuse row da' thing?"

The girl said nothing, pretending that she didn't hear him. Quickening her pace, she silently prayed to Naga that Robin would get the hint and drop the subject. Naga was not listening that day.

"Nah! I asked you what you were shouting."

Still not speaking, Nah sped up her already brisk walk, about to break into a full sprint.

"Is this what being Kellam feels like?"

The manakete gripped the dragonstone in her pocket. She was seriously considering flying away at this point. Luckily for her, a distraction came in the form of—

"THE BUBBLY REALM IS BACK!"

—her mother.

Nah sighed. On one hand, she was immensely thankful for the interruption. On the other hand, Nowi would probably be gushing about the mystical world of alternate realities for an hour. The infamous "Bubble Realm" had been curiously inaccessible for several months. No one, including the Outrealm keeper Anna, was able to figure out what had happened. Not that Nah cared; she thought the whole idea of the Bubble Realm was just stupid. Who in their right mind would want to see themselves, for example, dressed up as some vigilante? Well, most of the Shepherds would, but Nah certainly didn't.

Robin, quickly forgetting his earlier query, dashed over to the green-haired manakete. "Are you serious? What happened? Did you guys try turning it off and on again like I said to?"

Nowi rolled her eyes and laughed. "For the dozen billionth time, Robin, nobody knows how to do that! No, Anna just sent a letter saying that she was able to get back into the Bubble Realm. She's not sure what fixed it."

Robin shrugged. "Interesting, but I guess it doesn't matter much." Turning to Nah, he said, "Oh yeah, I was trying to ask you. Why were you shouti—"

"So, who's going to the...the Realm next?" Nah blurted out, cutting the very confused tactician off.

Nowi grinned. "You are!" she cheered. "Isn't it great?"

Nah just stared. That wasn't what she wanted to hear. "Um, are you sure?" she asked timidly. When her mother responded with a chipper nod, the girl sighed. "Alright then...I guess I better go get ready." She dashed away before Robin had the chance to ask his question.

"You'll be fine, sweetie," the redhead known as Anna assured her patron. "Just think of it like watching someone who looks exactly like you starring in a play featured around you! Except it's not you."

"You say that like that like you experience it weekly," Nah responded, approaching the Outrealm Gate.

"A few of my sisters fancy themselves actresses," Anna explained dryly. "I've had to sit through many performances."

Nah chuckled softly. Stepping onto the emblem on the Gate, she vaguely heard Anna murmur a few words. The manakete became bathed in white light. The next thing she knew, she was in a lush meadow. A tome rested on a pedestal several feet away. Slowly walking up to it, Nah held her breath as she placed her hand on the book. Instantly she found herself surrounded by, well, bubbles. "I guess they weren't joking," Nah muttered to herself, examining the floating pictures. As she gazed into the bubbles, she saw herself in multiple scenarios. In one bubble, she saw herself in dragon form, surrounded by what seemed to be seven glowing orbs. There was a small group gathered underneath her, apparently begging for a wish for some reason. In another bubble, she saw herself fighting a giant cat-creature of some sort. However, the bubble that attracted her the most contained an image of a man wearing a horned helmet. The Bubble Nah was surrounded by other dragons, as they collectively dashed at the man.

The girl reached out and touched the bubble. Once again, she was blinded by a bright light. When her vision recovered, Nah gazed out at a tundra. Ferox, by the looks of it. A young woman stepped out from behind a thick tree. This other Nah was much different from the "real" Nah. This duplicate (who will henceforth be referred to simply as "Nah") was older, taller, and bore quite a few scars. She scanned her surroundings, searching for prey. Despite not wearing a cloak, she did not seem affected by the cold. Nah turned her gaze to the sky and spread out her arms. Without the use of a dragonstone, she suddenly shifted her form into that of the flying beast.

Nah spun in the air, going higher and higher. She then found her target: a small village several miles away. With a monstrous roar that would make even the toughest of men quiver, she then dove towards the grouping of houses. The puny townspeople cried out in terror as her magenta scales shimmered in the cold light. She landed harshly onto a building, sending a wave of dust flying from the roof. A few guards brave enough to attempt to defend the village fired their arrows at her, but the projectiles simply bounced off her armor. With a cruel laugh, she shouted. And with that shout came fire. The guards retreated, rolling on the snow in their attempts to douse the flame that clung to their bodies. Nah laughed again and leaped off the building, sailing through the air while the citizens of the village fled in terror. They did not get far. The manakete landed on one man, crushing him instantly. His brother was quickly eaten. A guard charged Nah, bringing his sword down on her left wing. Annoyed, she spun around and smashed her tail into his gut, sending him sprawling. As she approached for the kill, the guard muttered weakly, "I could have been an adventurer, you know? But then I took an arrow to the—" And lo, he could doth speak no more, for he had been burnt to a bloody crisp.

Good riddance.

Within half an hour, the entire village was in flames. The few townspeople that had survived the onslaught of the great and terrible manakete Nah wailed in fear and sorrow as they quivered behind rocks and trees. Deciding to let the rest of the villagers live as an example to her own awesome power, Nah soared through the air, leaving the remains of the village and its people behind. She soon arrived at the only place she knew to call home: Demon's Ingle. The smoldering flames of the volcano didn't bother her. In fact, she rather enjoyed the warm environment, even though she was used to the freezing cold that plagued the land. Dozens upon dozens of manaketes (in their human forms, of course) lounged around, swapping stories and laughing. Nah gently landed down before shifting her form. A few other manaketes greeted her with a wave. Just as she was about to walk over to her fellow beings of destruction, she was tackled from behind by a very short middle-aged woman.

"Hello, darling!" the woman said excitedly. "How was your day? Did you burn down any villages? Have you found a mate yet? Have you eaten?"

Nah sighed. "Fine, yes, no, yes," she replied to her mother.

Nowi grinned. "Great! Anyhow, you're just in time. The Matriarch is announcing something super important in a few minutes!"

The young woman groaned inwardly. She respected the Matriarch Tiki, of course—to feel otherwise would be treason—but something about the head manakete made her uneasy. Maybe it was the fact that she appeared to be a little older than Nah, despite being the eldest manakete in existence. Maybe it was the burning hatred of humans that the Matriarch held. (Nah herself saw the weaker beings as food and entertainment, but they weren't significant enough to be hated.) Maybe it was the fact that the Matriarch spent most of her time sleeping, yet boasted of the same past accomplishments like they had occurred yesterday. Whatever the reason, Nah was not looking forward to spending two hours listening to

some old lady ramble on about some human settlement. However, when the Matriarch did step out of a large tunnel in the side of the volcano wall, all who were present were surprised to see how grave their leader's (human-form) face was.

"We have an urgent problem," Tiki said, the pink ribbons on her arms fluttering in the heated wind of the Ingle. "There's a human who—"

There was a collective sigh of boredom amongst the crowd of manaketes as everyone resigned themselves to listening to an anti-human rant. Even Nowi muttered something about old coots never knowing when to stay asleep.

The groans of the people did not escape the Matriarch. "Grima is dead," she said simply.

A hush quickly settled over the manaketes. Grima was known amongst their people as, well...dysfunctional. He couldn't shrink into a human, he had six eyes for some reason, he was fat as heck, and he was always blabbing about how he was going to bring upon the end of the world. Nonetheless, he was also known as one of the most, if not *the* most, powerful manaketes in the world.

And he had been killed.

"He was slain by a human known as 'Robin'. Apparently, Grima, in his 'infinite wisdom', blessed a family with manakete blood. Robin, it seems, is a Manaketeborn."

"Manaketeborn? Really? We're still using that name?" Nowi muttered, seemingly unaffected by the larger picture. Nah, on the other hand, was much more concerned. Manaketeborn, or "Manaketeborn" in their language, were infamous for their slaughtering of manaketes. Everyone had thought them extinct for centuries. And if this one was able to defeat Grima...

"As of now, we do not know the extent of Robin's abilities," the Matriarch said. "But we know this: if he is not stopped now, he will become stronger. Thus, I have decided to call upon all available manaketes to hunt down the Manaketeborn and avenge our fallen brother!"

There was silence amongst the crowd.

Tiki sighed. "Alright, we'll give Robin a fruit basket or something for getting rid of Grima. But then we'll kill him! For honor and survival!"

The manaketes erupted into cheers.

"Any questions?" the Matriarch asked.

"What happens to the humans we eat after we shift forms?" Nowi called out.

Nah groaned and buried her face in her hands.

The sound of doors being shut and windows being boarded could be heard as the sky darkened. It was still midday, but the bodies of over seventy manaketes blocked the sun's rays. Many humans thought that the end of their existence had finally come. But the beasts were not interested in mere humans at the moment. They were after much more significant prey. "This is where he was last sighted!" Tiki called to the group behind her. She dove towards the earth, the rest of the manaketes behind her. There a large gathering of cloaked men and women, all listening to a shouting herald. What the man was heralding exactly Nah didn't know, but with so many strange cults around, she could produce a decent guess.

As she neared the speaker, Nah began to hear bits of his speech. Something about "with pain comes gain", and "the suffering will be momentary, but the glory will be eternal". The landing of the manaketes did not escape unnoticed by the cult, but they didn't seem too afraid of the creatures. "Where is Robin?!" Tiki roared threateningly. The herald quickly ran over, which was no small feat seeing as how he had a major limp.

"I beg of you, oh great and mighty harbingers of the end times," the herald said, prostrating himself on the ground, "do not be angry with us. We would gladly hand over the one named 'Robin' over to you, as he is one of our enemies, but he has departed from out presence."

Nah scanned the gathering. "What exactly *are* you?" she asked, noticing that the man wasn't the only one with a limp. In fact, it seemed that all of the humans favored one leg over the other. Heck, a few of them were even forced to sit, unable to support themselves.

The herald beamed, happy to talk even more about his beliefs. "We are called 'The Nee'. While our reach has dwindled over the past couple of years, we still have many followers. We believe in sacrificing a small part of our bodies so that our spirits may transcend this realm. We have all left behind lives of adventure in order to live eternally in the dark realm called the Internet."

"Oh, please, no," Nah thought inwardly.

"In other words, we all used to be adventurers, but then we took arrows to our—"

And lo, his mouth, and the rest of his earthly form, ceased to be, for he had been incinerated fourscore times. Three dozen of the Nee fell that day to the manaketes. And there was much rejoicing in the realm.

It took the manaketes many days to track down Robin, partially due the fact that it was three days before they found anyone who knew what he looked like. He had covered his tracks well, either staying in caves or hiding in plain site. It was obvious that he had taken stealth lessons for the great master Kellam. Nonetheless, he was found, for no mere human can flee from the wrath of a manakete. Also, the author of this story wanted to hurry up and finish the chapter.

Surprisingly, Robin was found simply standing out in the open, next the bones of a dragon. He had gone a considerable distance from the icy fields of the north, ending up in a desert wasteland. Of course, in a place such as this, a tundra could be a few day's travel from a sunny beach.

Robin clutched his purple cloak as half of the manaketes began to land, sending dust and debris into the air. "Are you the one called Robin?" Tiki demanded cautiously.

The man looked up, his dark eyes staring at a point far away from the manakete. "I am," he replied simply.

Tiki roared in victorious glee, charging straight at the elusive human. Robin raised an arm and fired a small dark sphere from his hand. To Nah's shock, the Matriarch was sent sprawling as she was struck by the magic attack. The other manaketes growled and attacked. In the blink of an eye, Robin had leaped over the maw of one beast, drawing his sword as he did. He slashed behind him, scarring one manakete, while firing a stream of dark magic to counteract a burst of flame that was fired at him. A few manaketes, including Nah and Nowi, stayed on the edge of the battle, cautiously waiting for an opportunity to attack. With a yell, Robin thrust his sword into the skull of a manakete, killing it instantly. Nah gasped. The human had slain one of her kind so easily, as if he had been doing it for decades.

It was kind of hot.

Tiki, angered out of her stun, shouted at the murderer, sending a wave of pure force at him. Robin simply turned around and shouted back. The chain reaction from the two shouts created the feared "FUS RO DAH of awesomeness", snapping the necks of two manaketes who had gotten too close to the blast. Robin tossed his sword at Tiki, who attempted to twist and dodge. The weapon imbedded itself into her wing, causing her to scream and fall.

"Um, should we do something?" Nah asked her mother timidly.

"HAHAHAHAHAHA!" Nowi shouted gleefully. "KILL THOSE SUCKERS, ROBIN!"

And kill those suckers he did. Within the hour-long battle, Robin had slain fifty manaketes, thanks to his own impossibly OP abilities and the disadvantage the huge beasts had when fighting in a group—they simply were too uncoordinated to work together. Tiki herself succumbed to the fearsome foe after he fired two ice spikes into her throat. Every other manakete besides Nah and Nowi had either fled or fallen. Robin looked up at the pair. Realizing that they weren't a threat, he sheathed his sword and began to push the manakete corpses of a cliff for fun.

Nah landed gently on the ground and quickly shifted forms before Robin could assess her as a danger. "Um, Mr. Robin?" she peeped questioningly.

"Mm?" the man responded, not even turning around.

There was a short pause. Nah quickly ran into Robin's arms. "Oh, my love, I knew from the moment that I first saw you that we were meant to be together," she gushed.

Robin smiled sweetly at Nah. "I feel the same way!" he exclaimed, not caring who heard it for the love in his heart. "We shall be wed before the day is—"

"*No, no, I'm not doing this anymore," I say, shaking my head. "I can't even look at the words as I write them!"*

"*Wimp," Sora from* Kingdom Hearts *mutters.*

"*When are you going to write a* League of Legends *fanfic?" Teemo whines.*

"*When I win a freaking promo, you dirty rat," I reply in annoyance.*

"*Oy! The story needs more Gregor."*

"*I know, I know!"*

"*Hey, Kaito, Cordelia called. She's suing you for not detailing the romance between her and Chrom in the last chapter."*

"*Why the heck are all of you guys in my head all the time?"*

"*Are you going to finish the chapter, or should I do it?"* Mass Effect's *Commander Shepherd asks.*

"*Heck no. You'll just screw up the last paragraph and ruin the whole series. I'll finish it.*

Just then, a giant walked by and smote both Robin and Nah with his club, sending them flying into orbit.

"..."

"..."

"..."

"Well, I finished it, didn't I?"

Nah, the real Nah, gaped as her vision ended. Not only was the idea of her falling in love with Robin completely weird and disgusting, especially as he was already married to one of her friends, but why the heck was up with...everything?

Though she did have to admit, it was pretty cool to see herself wrecking a village.

When Nah arrived back at the palace the next morning, everyone wanted to hear her story. However, she was determined to keep her mouth shut. There were far too many embarrassing things in her vision that she didn't want to share. Robin would certainly notice that Nah was avoiding him, and not just because she didn't want any more questions about her earlier shouting. Within a week, everyone, including Robin, had gotten the picture and ceased their questioning. Nah believed that the matter would never come up again and she could devote herself to wiping the scenes from her memory.

Or so she thought. One day, during a conversation with her mother about the history of the manaketes, Nah was startled her hear Nowi speak a startling revelation.

"There would be a lot more of us manaketes if it wasn't for that rotten Manaketeborn."

Chapter 13: Chapter 12: Ylisse Noir

The man coughed. "How long has it been?" he asked his long-time companion, his voice scratchy and weak.

"Too long, my friend," his companion replied. He was younger, but beginning to show the signs of age: strange hiccups, the occasional seizure, even a complete memory wipe had been necessary. But the companion would not quit, not while he still had power running through his blue/red veins.

"They've been waiting for us," the old man chuckled, more than a little sadly. "All…how many now?"

"74."

"…Our work has been buried under so many others, and yet they still seem to find it..." The old man stretched and walked over to his friend, who had been there for him through thick and thin.

"Think you can crank out another one?" the companion asked carefully. "Our heyday has long passed. There's a new entry arriving…perhaps we should wait until—"

"No!" the old man exclaimed, dropping himself into the seat across from his companion. "No more stalling! I have an idea for the next installation."

The companion allowed himself a small smile. "As you wish, old friend," he agreed.

The old man popped his knuckles. He reached out his arms to his companion, the computer that he had written so many words with. Then he began to type:

"Fire Emblem What if: Chapter 12"…

"Fascinating!" Laurent exclaimed, taking a long look around the…rather ineptly named Bubble Room. He was surrounded by translucent spheres, all of which bore the image of an alternate reality. The young man began to pace the room, taking in the dozens upon dozens of scenes that were playing out. How many were there? Hundreds? Thousands? Alas, his curiosity would have to be sated with the investigation of but one alternate world.

"Decisions, decisions," the scientist murmured, scanning the various bubbles. Perhaps he could explore a reality where he had stayed behind in the dark future? No, too depressing. Another reality, where he was a scientist working in an underwater utopia, seemed much more uplifting. Besides, he could observe the achievements of a technologically advanced civilization. Ah, but it was unlikely that his world had the same materials readily available as that one. Yet another world caught Laurent's attention.

He saw himself in a dark room, illuminated slightly by a small yellow orb suspended by the ceiling. The other-Laurent was holding a long stick, thinner at the other end, in the direction of a white sphere. Behind the figure, the shadowy outline of chemistry equipment could be seen. But what really drew Laurent to this reality was what on his mirror image's cranium: a black hat, similar to his own, but with a white stripe around the circumference. Laurent was sure that if Cynthia was present to observe this, she would have remarked the entirety of the scene was "super cool". Indeed, Laurent himself was impressed by the display of style shown by the man in the bubble, so much so that he quickly made up his mind to delve into this strange and alluring world…

Pool. Pool never changes… Laurent thought, staring down the end of his stick at the cue ball. It was a dark night, around 7:45 PM. Raining, as if Naga herself were shedding tears over the crimes of the world. It was quiet, too, which was good for downtown Ylisse, but bad for business. He was thinking of letting his secretary, Noire, off work early, though she rather seemed to enjoy being in the office—something about troubles with her mother at home. Laurent was good enough of a private investigator to know when not to ask more questions, though it was contrary to his inquisitive nature.

Clack Laurent struck the white sphere with his cue stick, sending it smashing into the arrangement of similar, multicolored balls. Every single one, save for the cue ball, fell into one of the holes at the sides of the pool table. Laurent smiled and casually leaned on the stick. Billiards was the perfect game for a hard-boiled investigator such as himself. It required logic, a knowledge of physics, and intuition.

"Y'know, I'm pretty sure you're not supposed to hit your opponent's balls into the pockets," a voice from behind Laurent said, shaking him out of the moment.

The man sighed and adjusted his fedora, his prized possession. "My only opponent in this game, Inigo, was physics," he replied to his partner. "And I do believe that I have won."

"…alright, if you say so," the other investigator replied, walking down the steps into the basement in which Laurent spent much of his free time. Inigo took a second to brush his perpetually immaculate locks. "We have a client," he said. "A dame. Young, pretty."

Laurent sighed again. Often times, those three adjectives were the only ones his partner needed to know before he was off flaunting their past achievements. Though they were impressive, make no doubt (how many PIs could claim to have found the kidnapped Cynthia Exultt, the niece of the mayor?), the hatted man was more interested in future cases. "I suppose we'd best greet her," Laurent declared, quickly straightening his trench coat and putting his fedora back on (though Inigo would later recall that he had never actually taken it off…).

The stairs creaked as the pair slowly trudged up to the main floor. Laurent had been meaning to get them repaired, but things, namely bills, had always gotten in the way. The building as a whole wasn't too big. Two stories, plus the basement. Laurent lived in the upper floor. The place reeked of alcohol and the blues—probable companions of the building's previous owner.

"LAURENT!" Inigo shouted. Laurent's piercing green eyes darted up. "Where do you go when you're gazing off into space?" the casanova questioned.

Laurent looked down, a bit bashful. It was an old habit of his, to be in his own world, away from the death and despair of this miserable existence. How unfortunate it was that he had not been born as a majestic Manakete, for he would have long since flown away from the troubles of the—

"By Naga, you're doing it again!" Inigo groaned, shaking his head. "What, do you think time freezes while you're having your inner monologues?"

"Time is a funny thing, Mr. Danser," a voice said, feminine and gentle, yet steadfast. The two men turned to the speaker, a blue-haired young woman wearing a navy-colored city suit—commonly worn by those closely connected with the town government. "We spend so much of our lives wishing for it to move faster, and yet it takes but a second for us to change our entire opinion on it."

Inigo smiled suavely at the woman. "Wise words from a beautiful woman. As for me, I find that the quality of time spent can be measured in the type of people I spend it with." He winked pointedly.

The woman raised her arms slightly in pause. It was then that Inigo noticed the service pistol at her right hip, causing him to cringe a bit. "Please, Mr. Danser," she replied. "It is a poor time for such levity. I'm afraid I bring some extremely unfortunate news."

Inigo nodded. "People very rarely come through the door with any other kind," he admitted with a slight touch of sadness.

Laurent suddenly spoke up. "You're from the mayor's office, aren't you?"

The blue-haired woman seemed surprised, but quickly recovered her composure. "That's correct," she said. "Well done."

"The suit was the first indicator," Laurent continued, as if explaining his words to a classroom. "I've seen it worn by the mayor's brother, as well as the mayor's bodyguards and other close relatives."

Inigo leaned over to the woman. "You'd best let him talk," he advised her. "Once he gets started, there's no stopping him."

Laurent either didn't hear his partner or he didn't care, because he kept speaking. "What was surprising was the firearm at your side. The "Falchion" model, correct? It's extremely rare, specially crafted for the head of the mayor's family. I thought there was only one in existence."

The woman smiled thinly. "Yes, that's a common…misconception," she noted.

Laurent continued: "You also bear a striking resemblance to the mayor's brother. A cousin, perhaps? No, the resemblance is far too uncanny. I don't believe I've read of you in the newspapers or heard about you on the radio, which is most unusual, seeing as how well-covered the mayoral family is right now." He paused to pace across the room. "And your eyes, they're…remarkable."

Indeed they were. The woman's eyes were like sapphires, holding both wisdom and power. As Laurent gazed into them, he found himself staring right into the essence of Ylisse itself: dark, beautiful, and very, very dangerous. The woman's irises seemed to swim, a pattern slowly forming in her left pupil. Somewhere, in the crevices of Laurent's mind, a perfect

connection began to form. He felt like a man wandering the darkness, searching for the light that would make everything so clear, and yet—

Laurent sighed (he had been doing that often). Something had interrupted his thoughts, sending them scattering into the abyss. "Do you hear that?" he asked.

"The only thing I hear is the creepiness radiating from you," Inigo muttered under his breath.

Laurent threw open a nearby window, causing the sound of slow jazz music to come through clearly. Three musicians stood five feet from the opening: the first was a short-haired man holding a saxophone and wearing dark shades coupled with a seemingly permanent frown; the second was a bald, dark-skinned man hovering carrying a bass and wearing…one sunglass over his left eye; and the third was a dark-skinned woman hovering over a piano.

"Pardon me, but do you mind playing your music somewhere else?" Laurent questioned, somewhat irately.

The group members glanced at each other and shrugged. "If you say so, cat," the bald man replied, easily slinging his instrument (which was almost as tall as he was) over his shoulder.

"I told you, Bassilio," the woman snapped, somehow lifting the entire grand piano off the ground, "we can't just keep following random people around. We need a proper stage."

"And I told *you* that we need to get the word out about the Feroxi!"

"That's a horrible band name."

"The kid likes it. Don't you, Lon'cool?"

"Please do not call me that," the sax player groaned.

"You'll dig it eventually," Bassilio replied. "Sorry to bother you," he said to Laurent before walking away with his group.

"…" Laurent noted.

"…" The blue-haired woman replied.

"…Well, that was odd," Inigo agreed.

The woman coughed politely. "Well, back to the topic at hand," she said. "Your observations are on the right track, Mister Maige—"

"Please, call me Laurent," the investigator interjected.

"—Laurent, then. Would you like to make a guess at my identity?"

The man dipped his fedora slightly. "Madam, I do not guess," he replied with a hint of smugness in his voice. "Amateurs guess. I analyze the evidence for what it is, and I deduce the correct answer. With that being said…" Laurent took off his fedora and gestured it towards the woman. "I do believe that you are none other than—"

"Awoman who is extremely dedicated to her father!" Inigo suddenly shouted, eager to get the drop on his more attentive partner. "Or, at the very least, a father figure." The young man smirked while Laurent glared at him with annoyance. "You were taught to handle yourself at a young age, but you don't like attention. You've been worried for a while now—for some weeks before your coming here. You're currently in a relationship with a heroic young man, and others don't approve of your style of dress." The man finished with a flourish of the hand.

The young woman stared at Inigo, honestly awestruck. "That…that's all correct," she stammered. "Except for one thing: I'm not with anyone right now."

Inigo winked at her. "Well, that's good to know."

If it was possible for someone to groan without making any noise, Laurent would have done it. "A very interesting analysis, Inigo," he admitted. The younger man had always been better at noticing personal characteristics. "And what do you deduce from your findings?"

Inigo hesitated. "Er…that is…"

"That's what I thought," Laurent chuckled. "Now, as I was saying…" He turned back towards the woman. "…I believe you

to be none other than the daughter of Chrom Exultt, the brother of the mayor!"

"That has to be, without a doubt, the most asinine thing you've said since you suggested that giant bunnies exist."

"Actually, he's correct," the woman admitted. "About who I am, that is."

"See! Even she agr—wait, really?" Inigo exclaimed. "How did you figure that out?"

Laurent placed his fedora back on top of his head. "It was quite simple, actually," he said. "You see, when she first entered, I noticed that—"

-Inigo Vision—

"*—blah blah blah hair blah blah rain and shadows blah blah noir blah hardboiled detective blah blah…"*

-End Inigo Vision—

"—and thus, the only possible conclusion remaining was that she is the mayor's niece," Laurent finished, oblivious to Inigo's obliviousness.

Inigo simply nodded absentmindedly.

The young woman tipped her head slightly. "Very good, detective. I now see why your mother speaks so highly of you."

Laurent allowed himself the thinnest of smiles. "I'm surprised she even mentions me, to be perfectly honest," he said shortly.

"My name is Lucina Exultt," the woman said. "And I've come to you to ask your aid in solving a murder."

Inigo snapped back to attention. "Whose?" he questioned.

Lucina hesitated, obviously having some difficulty with naming the deceased. "My aunt…Mayor Emmeryn."

There was a tangible heaviness that was laid upon the two men as the words left Lucina's lips. Mayor Emmeryn was well-liked by nearly everyone, and had been expected to run for another term. After some moments of tense silence, Laurent spoke. "Who—do you have any suspects?"

Again, the blue-haired woman paused before speaking. "I think it would be best for you to come to city hall yourselves," she answered. "You can talk with my father, er, the police captain. He'll have more information."

Inigo nodded. "Sounds good," he agreed. "I'll just let Noire know that we're leaving."

As if on cue, a raven-haired girl, small in stature, walked into the room carrying a tray of coffee mugs. She kept her head down, as if she was embarrassed by her appearance, and was wearing a remarkable pendant around her neck. "P-please excuse me," she said, her voice barely above a whisper. "I-I was wondering if any of you wanted a drink."

"I'll take mine to go, Noire," Inigo said with a wink, carefully taking the hot beverage from the tray.

"No thank you, " Lucina said graciously. "Er, Noir, was it?"

Noire, suddenly glaring at the other woman with eyes of burning fury, coldly replied, "It's *Noire*, miss."

Laurent coughed uncomfortably. He had become used to Noire's frequent mood swings, but they sometimes became an issue when he was speaking with clients. "I'll take one, thank you," he said quickly, taking a cup before Noire could say anything else.

Seemingly satisfied by the young man's gratefulness, Noire returned to her previously mousy state. "If you're not back by 9:00, I'll lock up," she assured him.

Laurent tipped his hat to the girl in reply. "Let's get moving," he said, his voice suddenly taking a dark tone. "I'm a fry cook, and it's time to serve a burger with a side of *justice*."

"…Wow," Inigo said, completely unimpressed. "I can't believe you just said that."

"Let's forget it ever happened," Laruent sighed yet again, shaking his head in embarrassment.

Naga must have taken notice of Emmeryn's death, because her downpour of tears only increased as we drove to town hall. But no amount of rain would wash away the sins of the city. Only fire could cleanse the impurities embedded in Ylisse's soul.

…sodium bicarbonate would probably do the trick too, but I sincerely doubt that there's enough baking soda in the world to rid this blasted city of its crime. I guess it's true what they say…Grima's got his hold on Ylisse.

"Does he do this often?" Lucina asked Inigo. They were standing by the entrance of the town hall building. The car had been parked over five minutes ago, but Laurent hadn't seemed to notice.

"Oh, only all the time," Inigo replied dryly. "He thinks he's in a movie or something. How about we get started? I'm sure he'll catch up."

Lucina glanced again at Lawrence, who had his eyes closed and was slowly nodding his head, as if saying to himself, "Yes, I am indeed one cool cat". The young woman decided that it was best to let him be for the time being.

The city hall of Ylisse was famed for having some of the most inspired and beautiful architecture in the state. Some magazine articles had gone so far as to say that the building seemed like a palace meant for royalty. But Mayor Emmeryn had always made a point to ensure that her citizens felt like city hall belonged just as much to them as it did to her. She personally received dozens of visitors a day, more than willing to hear their words, whether grateful or critical. This sense of a direct line between government and citizen had been felt by all.

And now Mayor Emmeryn was dead.

Lucina led Inigo through the grand halls of the building. They weren't the only ones there, though there were much fewer people than Inigo would have expected; even the parking lot was relatively empty. He recognized a few faces: Anna, the famous reporter who could spin a story any way she very well pleased; Cordelia, a new member of the Mayor's security team who Inigo had become friendly with; and Libra, the priest of the local Church of Naga. None of them looked happy.

As the small crowd noticed Lucina, it parted, allowing her and Inigo to pass through. What Inigo saw made him pull his hat over his eyes and curse under his breath. Mayor Emmeryn, so full of grace and majesty, was now a bloody mess on the floor. For the first time in recent memory, Inigo was speechless. Lucina was attempting to keep a neutral face, but Inigo could tell that she too was affected.

"May Naga accept her soul," Libra said quietly, making some sort of religious gesture that Inigo didn't really recognize.

"If Naga is real," Laurent said, coming completely out of nowhere, "she has long forsaken Ylisse. And one of her angels has just fallen."

"How nice of you to join us," Inigo said dryly, hoping that Libra wasn't too offended by his partner's agnostic attitude. Laurent was a cynical man who put little weight in supernatural beliefs. Inigo himself had always taken comfort in the thought that somewhere, there was a benevolent overseer who could bring justice in a world of chaos, but looking at the poor mayor, he could understand Laurent's thought.

"You're closer to the mark than you think, Laurent," a male voice spoke behind the group. Laurent turned to face the source of the comment: a man, slightly older than he, with messy white hair and a rather striking black trench coat… bearing the emblem of the infamous Plegia gang.

"And who might you be?" Laurent questioned suspiciously, wondering why a denizen of the underworld would be allowed near a primary crime scene.

"Pardon me, Mister Maige," Lucina interrupted, bowing slightly to the stranger with an intriguing sense of familiarity. "This is Robin Tackt. He's a…consultant for the police force. And a friend of my father's."

Laurent frowned. He didn't like having to deal with other consultants; few were able to keep up with his brilliance, and even fewer were patient enough to humor his ego. Besides, he didn't like working with someone who—

"It's just a token of a past that I have long since left behind, I assure you," Robin stated, gesturing to his coat as if reading the other man's mind. "Laurent Maige, son of Muriel Maige, the head lab technician of the Ylisse Police Department. Graduated from the police academy with top marks, yet decided to become a private investigator instead."

Laurent had to keep himself from rolling his eyes. He had been caught a little off guard by the other detective's initial words, but he had long become used to hearing some overconfident snooper prattle on about his background. "I see you have access to my records," he said dryly. "How pleasant for you. Do you also get the local newspaper?"

Unfazed by Laurent's remarks, Robin continued. "You highly respect your mother, but you fear remaining in her shadow. This is possibly the reason you changed your mind about entering the force. You don't know what to think of your father, and so you adopt a rather lackluster 'hardboiled' persona in order to give yourself an identity. Your social skills are mainly built on what you've read in trashy detective novels, so you likely haven't been on a date for the better part of your life. Oh, and you are a secret admirer of the program *Wyvernman and Ricken."*

As the observers gaped at the man, dumbstruck (though Inigo did give Laurent a shake of his head at that last particular revelation), Robin pulled out a pipe out of seemingly nowhere and began to smoke it. With a twinkle in his eye, he added, "Elementary, really."

Laurent could hear tiny violins playing. Before him was the man he had wanted to become for several years; someone who was truly "hardboiled", and not just a wannabe detective. The younger man was about to throw himself to the ground and beg the other detective to let him become his apprentice…but the floor was covered in blood, and Laurent didn't want to get his new clothes dirty.

"As for you," Robin stated, turning to Inigo, who flinched at the piercing gaze of the inspector. "…Too easy," he declared, turning away again. Inigo let out a sigh of relief.

Lucina cleared her throat politely. "If you are done with your little show, I would appreciate it if the three of you began collaborating on the…the mayor's murder. It's all hands on deck here."

Robin smirked slightly and waved his hand with a flourish. "I think it's best that you send everyone back home," he said dramatically. "You see. I have already deduced the identity of the murderer: none other than—"

"….FUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUU—"

Laurent, though usually quite pure of tongue and calm of temperament, had great difficulty keeping from uttering numerous curses as the vision vanished. What was precisely spoken will not be recorded here, but may it be known that this writer takes great offense to what was said about his mother.

The mage's foul mood persisted until he arrived back at the palace, and even then, he was without the will to associate with his friends and family. As soon as his feet touched the cobbled floor of the palace entrance, he headed straight for the royal library.

Nah founded him rummaging through a pile of books. "What's up with you?" she asked, watching as the stack of tomes grew higher and higher.

"I can't find it!" Laurent bemoaned, tossing a dusty text at the nearest wall.

"Find what?" Nah exclaimed.

"The…the gentlemen with the stylish hats and the brilliant downpour and the ghastly murders and the-the story! I can't find the story!"

The manakete wasn't sure how to respond. Her friend had finally lost his dragonstones. "…that's nice," Nah said lightly, quickly swiping a book titled *The Dragonborn Comes.* Without another word, she sped out of the room, leaving Laurent to his cries of despair.

"What's up with him?" Robin asked, passing Nah in the hallway near the library. She shrugged.

"We should really stop sending people to the Bubble Room," Nah suggested. "It's turning the Shepherds insane." The girl froze. "What if that's been its plan this entire time?" she whispered to herself.

Robin laughed heartily. "My dear Nah," he said, bending down to put his hand on her shoulder. "Children should really learn to keep their imaginations to themselves," the tactician whispered, a strange glint in his eye. "Otherwise…one might have to put them on the front lines to keep them focused…and accidents can happen in the heat of battle." Robin rose to his full height and laughed again. "I'll see you later, little one!" he called as he walked away, leaving a very confused and very afraid Nah behind.

"…Life is getting weirder by the chapter," Nah muttered, leaving to find a quiet place to read.